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SAVING SERGEANT BERGDAHL

THE
SOLDIERS
WHO
SEARCHED
FOR HIM
STILL
DON'T
KNOW
WHY
THEY
RISKED
THEIR
LIVES



Newsweek

FEATURES

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UNTANGLING THE MYSTERIES BEHIND BOWE BERGDAHL'S RESCUE MISSION

The soldiers who searched for him still don't know why they risked their lives.

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MEN HOLD ALL THE CARDS*



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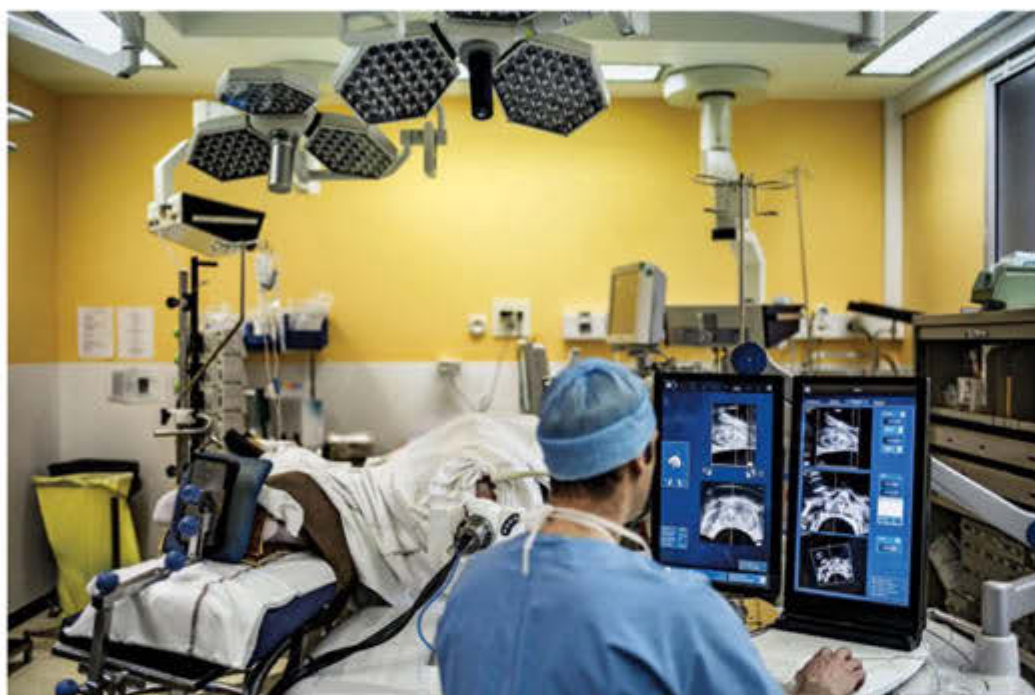
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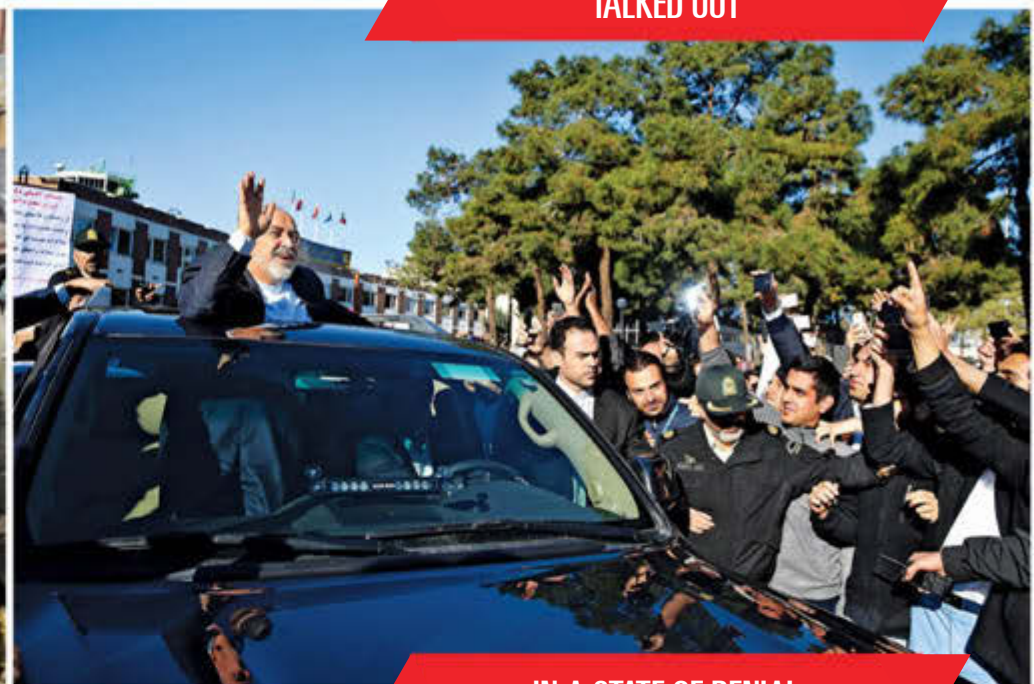
*THE STORY
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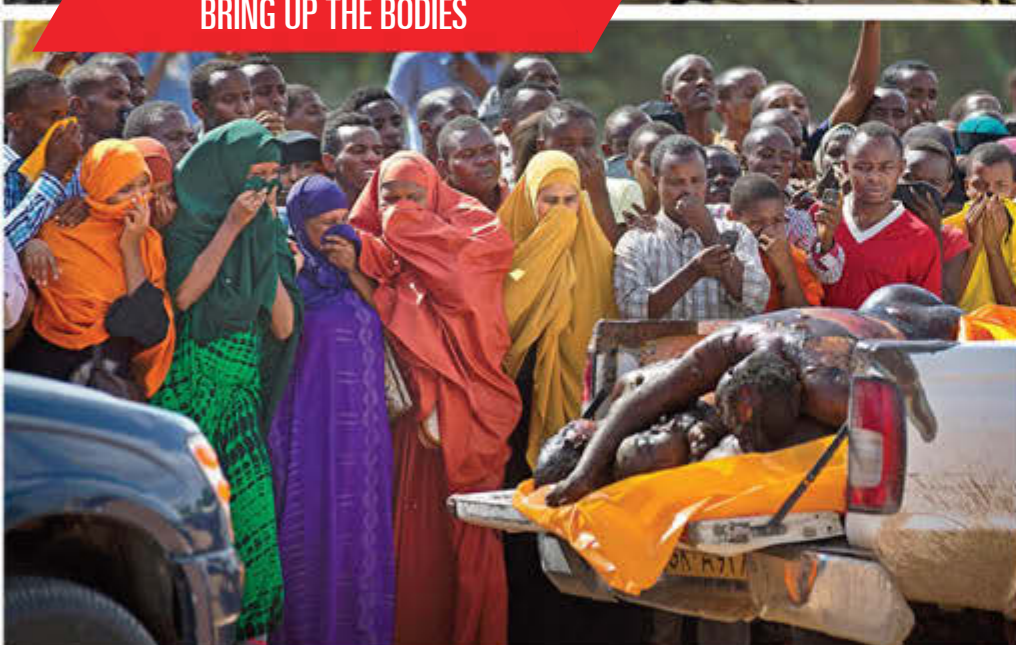
FISTS OF FURY



TALKED OUT



BRING UP THE BODIES



IN A STATE OF DENIAL





U.S. Army/Getty

UNTANGLING THE MYSTERIES BEHIND BOWE BERGDAHL'S RESCUE MISSION

**THE SOLDIERS WHO SEARCHED FOR HIM STILL DON'T
KNOW WHY THEY RISKED THEIR LIVES.**

It was before dawn at Observation Post Mest-Malak, a U.S. Army outpost surrounded by Taliban-controlled villages in eastern Afghanistan, when the men in Blackfoot Company 2nd Platoon first noticed that Bowe Bergdahl

was missing. An Army veteran who says he was one of Bergdahl's closest friends in Afghanistan and spoke to Newsweek on the condition of anonymity, remembers the moment well. "[Specialist Shane] Cross came over and he whispered, 'Hey, you seen Bergdahl?' and I knew instantly he was gone. I said, 'He's gone. He's fucking gone.'"

The U.S. Army boasts that it does not leave men behind, so when Private First Class Bergdahl disappeared in Paktika province on June 30, 2009, the Army was going to find him, no matter the cost.

His platoon-mates all knew Bergdahl was eccentric, a quiet kid who prided himself on the wilderness survival skills he learned growing up in Idaho. He was one of the fittest in the platoon, two of them told Newsweek, and he was meticulous about the gun-cleaning, field-manual-memorizing details of military life. He and his buddies liked to spend nights drinking chai with the Afghan National Police officers stationed up on a dusty hill. He smoked a pipe. Some of the guys thought he was weird, but they all thought he was reliable. "Up until the second he walked away, he was the example of the good soldier," says Army Specialist Gerald Sutton. "He was always doing his job. We never had to worry about him." Bergdahl's close friend from the platoon adds: "He always did what he was told, always there to help you. Always."



Some say Bowe Bergdahl is a modern-day Benedict Arnold who sought to aid America's enemy on the battlefield and caused the death of fellow soldiers. Some say the Army is trying to hide the truth in the fog of war. Credit:

U.S. Army/Getty

In downtime bitch sessions, when the men talked about shooting themselves in the foot or other schemes to get out of the war early, Bergdahl reportedly said his plan would be to walk to India. Or he said he would shed his weapons and gear, Siddhartha-like, and join the Kochis, nomadic Pashtun tribes whose dark tents dotted the Afghan valleys that looked eerily similar to the Idaho backcountry where he had honed his Man vs. Wild skills. His buddies thought it was just talk. "Everybody wanted to leave. We thought he was just venting," the friend says. "We didn't take it seriously. [At OP Mest] you couldn't even walk outside the base. We were in contact with the enemy anytime we left.... It was like, 'Whatever, [Bergdahl], you're full of shit.'"

But he did leave. Alone and unarmed, the 23-year-old was abducted within hours by local Zadran tribe militants, sources tell Newsweek, who passed him up the Taliban's regional chain of command. He was held as a hostage for five years, and only returned last year after a prisoner swap

that freed five Taliban fighters from the U.S. military's Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp.



From left, Colonel Bradley J. Kamrowski, Ph.D., Major General Joseph P. DiSalvo, and Colonel Ronald N. Wool deliver a press conference in San Antonio, Texas to report on Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl's return to the United States and reintegration at Brooke Army Medical Center. Credit: Drew Anthony Smith/Getty

Ten months after returning to home soil, Bergdahl was formally charged on March 25, 2015, with two crimes under the Army's Uniform Code of Military Justice: "Desertion With Intent to Shirk Important or Hazardous Duty" and the more serious "Misbehavior Before the Enemy by Endangering the Safety of a Command, Unit or Place." He is awaiting an Article 32 hearing, similar to a grand jury, and is working a desk job at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. The Army tries dozens of desertion cases each year (17 men were found guilty of the charge in 2009), and the maximum punishment is five years in military prison, a dishonorable discharge and the loss of back pay. The misbehavior-and-endangerment charge is far more serious, exceptionally rare (according to [Stars & Stripes](#), the last high-profile case was in 1968) and brings the maximum penalty of life in prison.

‘You’re Gonna Be Looking for Bergdahl’

Why Bowe Bergdahl walked into a hostile war zone isn’t much clearer now than it was the day he left. OP Mest was operating without an officer at the time, and according to his **lawyer**, Bergdahl snuck away to report disciplinary problems in his unit to an officer at a nearby base.

For the men he left behind in Blackfoot Company and the 1st Battalion of the 501st Regiment that night, life in Afghanistan changed instantly and dramatically. “From the second he left until we left the country, our whole mission was screwed up,” Bergdahl’s friend says. “[In] every operation order until March 2010, he was thrown in the mix: ‘You’re gonna be looking for Bergdahl.’”

“It changed the mission [in Afghanistan] for everyone,” says Sergeant Jordan Vaughan, who served in a separate Blackfoot Company platoon and says he was sent on at least 50 missions to find the missing soldier. “We stopped the regular counter-insurgency mission and instead went and looked for Bergdahl.” According to Vaughan and other men from Blackfoot Company, at least **eight soldiers** were killed on **those searches**. Platoon medic Josh Cornelison told **NBC News** last June, “Every single person that died [out there] was doing something to find Bowe Bergdahl.”



A Blackfoot Company, 1st Battalion 501st infantry Regiment (Airborne) 25th Infantry Division soldier mans an observation post at Malakh above where they were building a base for Afghan National Security Forces, May 27, 2009. Credit: Sean Smith/Guardian/Camera Press/Redux

In both legal and moral terms, the charge that Bergdahl's actions led to the deaths of fellow soldiers is the most important and disturbing one he faces, and yet the Pentagon has steadfastly denied the claim. "I do not know of specific circumstances or details of U.S. soldiers dying as a result of efforts to find and rescue Sergeant Bergdahl," former defense secretary Chuck Hagel said last summer. Bergdahl had been promoted during his captivity.

The families of those fallen men are outraged and frustrated by this apparent contradiction of facts and testimony. "They're not liars," says Cheryl Brandes of the soldiers' claims. Her son, Matthew Martinek, died from wounds suffered during an ambush on September 4, 2009, while on a mission, his comrades told her, to find Bergdahl. "There needs to be an investigation," she **told Fox News**. "Why is this such a cover-up? Why can they not just tell us, 'Yes, your son was looking for another soldier?' What's so bad about that?"

The Pentagon cannot answer Brandes without conceding an awkward and troubling fact: On the day her son was flanked by Taliban militants in an ambush that also killed 2nd Lieutenant Darryn Andrews, officials in Washington and Kabul already had overwhelming intelligence that Bergdahl was no longer in Afghanistan.



Bob Bergdahl listens as his wife Jani reads a message to their son Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl during a press conference at Gouen Field national guard training facility on June 1, 2014 in Boise, Idaho. Credit: Scott Olson/Getty

‘We Assumed It Became a CIA Operation’

From the hilltop guard post at OP Mest, it was just 25 miles or so to the Pakistani border, and, according to a former State Department official who spoke to Newsweek on the condition of anonymity, there was a widespread assumption in Kabul that Bergdahl would be shuttled to Pakistan as fast as his captors were able.

The day he was reported DUSTWUN (Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown), American military commanders working with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) ordered a secretive military unit—variously referred to as the intelligence support activity, mission support

activity, the activity or gray fox—to track leads about his whereabouts. One of the first officers on the case was an unconventional-operations specialist who was attending a jirga, a meeting of Afghan tribal elders, when he got the call about Bergdahl. The officer, who is not authorized to discuss the case and spoke on the condition of anonymity, says, “I got a call from our guy in Kabul. He said, ‘Hey, we got a lost puppy.’”

“We just happened to be talking to the elders in this tribe with knowledge of the area [where Bergdahl went missing],” the officer tells *Newsweek*. He says he immediately got to work, calling dozens of sources across Afghanistan. “We talked to Taliban lawyers and mullahs, border security police, a lot of people.”

The intelligence-gathering quickly brought precise information about Bergdahl’s captors. “We knew how they were going to move him, where they were going to move him. We figured it would be 48 hours at the most before he was across the border,” the officer says. When he investigated whether the Army could prevent Bergdahl’s captors from taking him across that border, the answer was clear. “There is no way to shut down border traffic. It’s the Silk Road, for God’s sake,” he says. “It’s been a smugglers’ transit route for thousands of years. So [the Taliban] better be pretty good at it. And they are.”

Within days, this officer was told by his superior to give up the search: “I was told to drop it, that someone else has got it.” The following week, he learned that the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which planned and executed the most sensitive raids of the war—including Operation Neptune Spear, the mission that killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011—had also been called off. “When JSOC was told to stand down,” the officer tells *Newsweek*, “we assumed it became a CIA operation in Pakistan.”



Men in civilian clothing lead Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, in white, towards a helicopter in eastern Afghanistan on May 31, 2014. Credit: Voice Of Jihad Website/AP

The moment Bergdahl was taken across the Afghan-Pakistani border, the search for him jumped its own distinct legal boundary. Rescuing the “lost puppy” went from the purview of traditional military operations to a covert intelligence mission. “Anything south of that line was outside the area of Operation Enduring Freedom,” the military mission in Afghanistan, the officer says. At that point, “it would have taken the president or a CIA operation to call a cross-border raid.”

By the second week of July, civilian and military officials were so confident Bergdahl had been smuggled across the Pakistani border that the JSOC and clandestine special operations units were called off the search...

So why did the Army continue to send infantrymen in Afghanistan on dozens of missions in hostile territory to find him?

A High-Value Hostage

The militants who captured Bergdahl were never coy about their identity or why they had kidnapped him. Two days after he was abducted, they held the Taliban equivalent

of a press conference to take responsibility and make their demands. “The case will be referred to Sirajuddin Haqqani and other top Taliban leadership,” Mullah **Sangeen, a well-known Taliban commander in Paktika**, told a **CBS** reporter on July 2, 2009. “They have to decide the future of the U.S. soldier, but we would not mind a prisoner exchange.”



U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel (L) meets with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad in Doha, December 10, 2013. Credit: Mark Wilson/Pool/Reuters

The Pentagon was equally clear about the players involved. “An American soldier captured in southeastern Afghanistan is being held by a notorious militant clan, a senior U.S. military official said,” is how **CNN’s** Barbara Starr put it. Reports by the **BBC**, **The Washington Post**, and **The Long War Journal** concurred: Bergdahl had been taken by the Haqqani Network.

The Haqqanis were a terrorist threat that was well known in Washington and Kabul, and they were a constant source of diplomatic headaches. During the Cold War, Jalaluddin Haqqani was a handsomely paid CIA proxy in the fight

against the Soviets, but after 9/11, his family took up arms against the latest infidel invaders. “In Pakistan’s tribal areas of North and South Waziristan, Maulavi [Jalaluddin] Haqqani and his sons run a network of madrasas and training bases and provide protection for foreign fighters and terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda,” [The New York Times](#) reported in June 2008.

In November of that year, the Haqqanis lured Times reporter David Rohde to an interview south of Kabul, then snatched him and immediately smuggled him across the border to Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas. “The Haqqanis oversee a sprawling Taliban mini-state in North Waziristan with the acquiescence of the Pakistani military,” Rohde said in *A Rope and a Prayer*, the 2010 book he co-wrote with his wife, Kristen Mulvihill, about his seven months as a Haqqani hostage. By the spring of 2009, several months into his captivity, Rohde’s situation was common knowledge to then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton, State Department ambassadors to the region, management of The New York Times, American intelligence and law enforcement agencies, as well as the private hostage negotiators and consultants Rohde’s wife and family had recruited.

On June 20, 2009, Rohde fled in a daring and successful escape, the details of which remain unclear. Ten days later, in a stroke of luck for a terrorist group that had made kidnapping a pillar of its business, the Haqqanis replaced the journalist with an even more valuable hostage—the first and only American soldier captured in that war.



Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, right, stands with a Taliban fighter in eastern Afghanistan. Credit: Voice Of Jihad Website/AP

‘Looking for Someone Who Speaks English’

Before Sangeen called that press conference, Bergdahl’s captors hurried to make a proof-of-life tape and deliver it to the highest-ranking American official they could reach in Kabul. Having video proof was a high priority for the militants, first discussed in a conversation intercepted by American spy planes about six hours after Bergdahl’s platoon reported him missing. “An American soldier with a camera is looking for someone who speaks English” is how the Army interpreter paraphrased the intercepted radio or cellphone chatter. That message, which was logged in the classified Army record later published by [WikiLeaks](#), matches the memories of men in Blackfoot Company who heard the interpreter’s words over the radio that morning. It is cited as proof by some members of the platoon and multiple media organizations that Bergdahl had gone looking to join the Taliban, that he was a traitor. “That means he’s going to collaborate with the enemy, [doesn’t] it?” Sean Hannity said on his [Fox News show](#).

But according to Robert Young Pelton, a journalist **consulted by the military** to help find Bergdahl, that message was wrong, a bad translation from the captor's Pashto language. It wasn't the young American who had a camera and was looking for someone who spoke English; it was Bergdahl's kidnappers, hurrying to speak to and record proof of their high-value hostage.

Pelton was working in Afghanistan as the director of AfPax, a subscription-based, conflict-zone information service. For a monthly fee, he provided clients with a stream of information gathered by local sources. "We had subscribers from every venue: media, State Department, [nongovernmental organizations], etc.," Pelton tells Newsweek. "The military, special operations, came to us and asked us for help [tracking Bergdahl]." One former military intelligence officer who would not talk on the record about the Bergdahl incident tells Newsweek that AfPax was the best source of clean intelligence in Afghanistan at the time.

The day after Bergdahl walked off his base, the spy planes picked up another conversation between militants about their new prize: "Can you guys make a video of him and announce it all over Afghanistan that we have one of the Americans?" the first asked. Another man replied, "We already have a video of him."

To Pelton, who tracked Rohde and other kidnapping victims in eastern Afghanistan, Bergdahl's destination was never in doubt: "We knew he was going to Pakistan as soon as [the Army] said they were missing a guy." Pelton worked with RC-East commanders—conventional U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan—for about two weeks before he was told to stop. "We went over to their office and they had maps on the wall, and we would point to Pakistan and say, 'He's going that way.' That's when they told us to wave off," he says.

Pelton, who wrote about his work tracking Bergdahl for Vice, says, “Everyone knew that Bergdahl was in Pakistan, and now everyone is trying to rewrite history.”

Ransom Demand: \$19m and 25 Prisoners

By the time the Haqqanis released their first proof-of-life video to the media, some Army officials had been informed that Bergdahl was already over the border. According to Qayum Karzai, the older brother of then-Afghan president Hamid Karzai, the Haqqanis delivered their first tape and ransom demands, via a courier, to Major General Edward Reeder Jr., **commander of Special Operations** in Operation Enduring Freedom at the time. The militants wanted \$19 million and 25 prisoners from Gitmo, roughly the same ransom demands first made to free Rohde. “Everyone knew he was in Pakistan...the Afghan government, tribal leaders, Afghan reporters,” Karzai tells Newsweek. “Everyone talked about it.” Believing the courier had firsthand information about the captured soldier, Karzai says he “took that gentleman to see General Reeder and we worked very hard on freeing Bergdahl.”



A billboard calling for the release of U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, held for nearly five years by the Taliban after being captured in Afghanistan, is seen near Spokane, Washington on February 25, 2014. Credit: Jeff T. Green/Reuters

According to Linda Robinson, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corporation, who interviewed Reeder for her book *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare*, the general learned of Bergdahl's location from two sources. The first, a former Taliban minister who had joined the Afghan government, told Reeder that Bergdahl had been taken to Miran Shah, the same town where Rohde spent most of his seven months in captivity. The second was Karzai's courier. Sometime shortly after Reeder received the first ransom demand, the courier brought a second message that lowered the ransom to \$5 million and dropped the request for a prisoner swap. Reeder told Robinson he passed the message up the chain of command, but to his surprise, "none of his superiors followed up on it."

Reeder declined to comment on this story through an Army public affairs officer. Both retired general Stanley McChrystal, Reeder's superior at the time, and retired general Mike Flynn, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency during the search, also declined to

answer Newsweek's questions related to the Bergdahl case. (Reporter's disclosure: For the first year of Bergdahl's captivity, I worked in his hometown, and his father was the UPS deliveryman at the office where I worked.)

On July 18, 2009, 18 days after Bergdahl had walked away from his base, the Haqqanis released a video of him to the **international press**, and **ABC News** reported that, according to "a person actively involved in the search," he had been taken to Pakistan. In interviews with ABC News, U.S. officials at the Pentagon and in Kabul denied the claim, insisting he was still in Afghanistan.

'The War Was About to Be Lost'

The idea that America's only prisoner of war in the post-9/11 era was being held inside the borders of a key ally in its War on Terror posed some serious problems. In mid-2009, when Bergdahl apparently was smuggled over one of the most dangerous borders in the world, Washington had real concerns over "not wanting to go to war with Pakistan," says Ahmed Rashid, a Lahore, Pakistan-based journalist and author.

Bergdahl's abduction coincided with the start of the **largest American surge** in the 13 years of that war—from less than 40,000 servicemen in early 2009 to about 100,000 in late 2010. In the summer of 2009, the Taliban were ascendant across southern Afghanistan, and, as Robinson writes, the Americans realized "the war was about to be lost." The escalation affected both sides of the border. On the Pakistan side, **CIA drone strikes** (that the Bureau of Investigative Journalism reports likely killed many more civilians than militants) rose from 35 in 2008 to 117 in 2010. After an errant ISAF helicopter **killed three Pakistani soldiers** stationed near the border, the Pakistanis temporarily cut off the ISAF's main supply artery, and relations between Washington and Islamabad hit new lows.

Rashid, who consulted with both the Rohde and Bergdahl families during their negotiation efforts, says the captured

soldier was an inconvenient truth for the Americans. At such a delicate moment, a covert cross-border raid to retrieve one infantryman was a catastrophic risk. Bergdahl was trumped, says Rashid, by the top American priority: “protect the already fragile but still useful relationship with Pakistan to get at Al-Qaeda.”

On Christmas Day 2009, nearly six months after the Army called off its elite special operations and JSOC units from the search, and after commanding officers sent the men of Blackfoot Company on nearly six months’ worth of raids and missions to allegedly find him, **the Haqqanis released a second proof-of-life video**, a strange and uncomfortable **spectacle**. A thin Bergdahl sometimes reads and sometimes rambles through a lengthy indictment of American policy:

II

**“And so do I, my family members,
my fellow soldiers in the Army
and their families, and all the
regular Americans, do we or
even should we trust those that
send us to be killed in the name
of America? Because aren’t our
leaders, be it Obama or a Bush or
whoever, aren’t they simply the
puppets of the lobbies that pay
for their election campaigns?”**

Speaking for the Pentagon, Rear Admiral Gregory Smith called the video an affront to the soldier’s family and friends. “It reflects nothing more than the violent, deceitful tactics of the Taliban insurgency,” he said. “We will continue our search for Bowe Bergdahl.”

‘You Will Be Hunted...’

In the days after Bergdahl disappeared, Blackfoot Company scrambled its platoons. For the first 35 to 40 days, according to several men, the search was “nonstop.” Squads were sent to follow every lead, in any direction. For some, that meant driving to sit in far-off “blocking positions” to

intercept any Taliban vehicles that might be stowing him. Some soldiers were sent beyond the reach of the Army's supply trucks, to desert frontiers where contracted Russian pilots air-dropped food and water from helicopters that looked older than the Americans on the receiving end. The soldiers of Blackfoot Company were also sent to raid distant Afghan villages. Infantrymen **distributed pamphlets** to Afghan civilians asking for information about Bergdahl. The flyers had pictures of American soldiers kicking down doors and a caption that read, "If you do not release the U.S. soldier then...you will be hunted."

Bergdahl's platoon's missions soon ranged beyond Paktika and into neighboring border provinces. "It was a wild goose chase," says Bergdahl's friend from the 2nd Platoon. "We went all over southeast Afghanistan." But, he adds, "we did whack a lot of people in the process."



Sgt. Jonathan Rice (L) of Port Orange, Fla. and Sgt. Michael Phillips of Hemet, Calif. from the Army's Blackfoot Company 1st Battalion 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment keep watch during a joint patrol with the Afghan National Police on December 4, 2009 in Sar Hawza, Afghanistan.

Credit: Scott Olson/Getty

As the weeks wore on, another Blackfoot Company team leader, Sergeant Johnathan Rice, suspected his commanders weren't really looking for Bergdahl. "Common sense dictates that [whoever took him wasn't] going to keep him around for long." But unlike most of the soldiers in his platoon, Rice saw a method in the Army's madness. "From an infantryman standpoint, we were doing our job for once," he says. "We were actually going to towns, doing our assaults, raiding places."

Before Bergdahl went missing, Rice says, his men had their hands tied. "We weren't able to do 'hard knocks'—when you hit a target and breach their house early in the morning or overnight. We would need a ridiculous amount of intel to get the green light to do that kind of thing. But if it was a mission to retrieve Bergdahl, it was an instant green light. It was always worded as 'These people could have information on Bergdahl.' But my speculation is that they were targets that we wanted to bring in anyway."

Rice felt his men were now taking the fight to the enemy, rather than "just knocking on the door and asking to have some tea." Before Bergdahl left, "we were walking through markets buying goats because we had nothing else to do." During these searches for Bergdahl, "we had excuses to hit high-value targets or hit people of interest."

"A lot of valuable intelligence was gathered," Rice says, and Bergdahl was the excuse his commanders needed to do their jobs. "Leadership took the opportunity, and I stand 100 percent behind it."



President Barack Obama (C) stands with Bob Bergdahl (R) and Jami Bergdahl as he delivers a statement about the release of their son, prisoner of war U.S. Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, D.C., May 31, 2014. Credit: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

The #Bergdahl Lynch Mob

After being held hostage for five years, a pale and bald Sergeant Bergdahl emerged from the back of a militant's Nissan, **allegedly** in the border province of Khost, and boarded an American Blackhawk helicopter. Within a day, about 8,000 miles to the west, five Taliban detainees (at least two of whom **had been in leadership positions**) boarded a U.S. C-17 military transport plane at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and were flown to Qatar, where they would be free but monitored and travel-restricted for a year. When National Security Adviser Susan Rice announced the swap as a triumph for America, further proof the U.S. Army doesn't abandon its men, the frustrations of the soldiers who had searched for Bergdahl roiled social media.

In the fall of 2009, the Army had the men in Blackfoot Company sign nondisclosure agreements, requiring them to never talk about the Bergdahl affair. But as stories from Afghan War soldiers started showing up on Twitter

and Facebook, six veterans of the 2nd Platoon, including Specialist Sutton, were recruited by Republican strategist Richard Grenell for a media tour. They were flown to New York last summer from Michigan, South Dakota, Texas, Washington and California and, says Sutton, put up in a cramped Manhattan hotel paid for by Fox News. They trashed Bergdahl, calling him a deserter first and foremost, but also, some said, a traitor, a sympathizer of America's enemy and a coward.

Much of the mainstream political media jumped in gleefully, speculating about Bergdahl's motives, his politics and his religion. They also opined on his parents' politics and religious beliefs, his father's "suspicious" beard, how frequently they talked to their son. And most important to the analysts of policy and politics, they talked about whether Bergdahl was "worth it."



A sign of support of Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl is seen in Hailey, Idaho, June 1, 2014. Credit: Patrick Sweeney/Reuters

After those soldiers and their families went public, Bergdahl's hometown of Hailey, Idaho, was swarmed, and the FBI was called in when Bergdahl's family received

multiple death threats. This spring, with each update about his case, including the recent news that he will face desertion and misbehavior-and-endangerment charges, the #Bergdahl lynch mob is roused again, overflowing with the righteous vengeance of those who want Bergdahl imprisoned for life, or worse. “The evidence shows right now that U.S. soldiers were killed searching for the man,” **Bill O’Reilly said** on his Fox News show in late March. That statement is not quite accurate. The full truth—that the Army sent infantrymen on dangerous missions to find a soldier it knew was no longer missing—is far more complicated, and confounding.

Forged in the political heat of TV news studios, the vitriolic descriptions of Bergdahl’s character and behavior do not match what those who knew him best say about him now. “He was a heck of a soldier,” says Bergdahl’s friend from 2nd Platoon. “He was odd. He was different, which is why the other guys didn’t like him.... He did meditating and Buddhist stuff and people thought it was weird. I’m weird. Everyone is weird in their own way.”

In politics and war, simple myths are more useful than complex realities. The soldiers who searched for Bergdahl did so without question, and in their selflessness, they called upon the military’s essential and sacred codes of honor. The families and small towns that lost men in those searches bear a powerful witness to the horror and confusion of America’s longest war. They deserve an honest accounting of what happened to their sons and why.

And as he prepares to defend himself against the charge that he caused their deaths, so does Bowe Bergdahl.



Aviva Klein

IN ORTHODOX JEWISH DIVORCE, MEN HOLD ALL THE CARDS

IN ORTHODOX JUDAISM, ONLY HUSBANDS CAN GIVE GETS, THE DOCUMENT THAT FORMALLY DISSOLVES A MARRIAGE UNDER JEWISH LAW. WHILE MOST DO, THOSE WHO REFUSE WIELD ENORMOUS POWER OVER THEIR WIVES.

“Basically, what we are going to be doing is kidnapping a guy for a couple of hours and beating him up and torturing him and then getting him to give the get,” Rabbi Mendel

Epstein told two potential clients. It was August 14, 2013, and he was sitting in his home in Lakewood, New Jersey, with a young Orthodox Jewish woman and her brother. She had sought out Epstein because she desperately wanted to divorce her husband, who was refusing to give her a get, the document that formally dissolves a marriage under Jewish law.

In Orthodox Judaism, only husbands can give gets, and while most do, those who refuse wield enormous power over their wives. Even with a civil divorce decree in hand, a woman is not divorced in the Orthodox Jewish world until her husband gives her a get. Until then, she is an *agunah*, a “chained” woman. If she falls in love and decides to remarry without the get, she would be considered an adulteress, and her children from that union would be shunned.

Epstein, an Orthodox Jewish rabbi in Brooklyn, New York, and Lakewood, had a reputation for facilitating divorces. On that August day a couple of years ago, he explained to the woman and her brother how he would persuade her husband to give her a get. He mentioned a team of “tough guys” who could torture her husband with electric cattle prods, handcuffs and karate and suffocate him using plastic bags. “I guarantee you that if you’re in the van, you’d give a get to your wife,” he said. “Hopefully, there won’t even be a mark on him.”

Epstein said his so-called “good deed” came with a price: \$10,000 for the *beth din*, the rabbinical court, to approve the scheme and \$50,000 to \$60,000 for those tough guys—one of whom was Epstein’s son David—to do the dirty work.



Rabbi Mendel Epstein, right, arrives for his trial at federal court in Trenton, N.J. on February 18, 2015. Prosecutors say Epstein employed a kidnap team to force unwilling Jewish husbands to divorce their wives. Credit:

Mel Evans/AP

Over the next six weeks, the young agunah and her brother paid up: \$10,000 for Epstein to arrange the kidnapping and beating and another \$20,000 to cover part of the fee for his work. Epstein told them to give him a check for the remaining \$30,000 on the day of the kidnapping.

A few weeks later, on September 25, the brother spoke to Epstein by phone to finalize the details. They discussed a warehouse the rabbi had in mind for the kidnapping, as well as how he planned to lure the husband there. When the brother asked if it was necessary for his sister's husband to enter the warehouse, Epstein said it might not be: "They don't need him for long, believe me. They'll have him in the van, hooded, and [the get] will happen."

Around 8 p.m. on October 9, 2013, Epstein's eight-person "kidnap team" arrived at the New Jersey warehouse in two dark minivans. Some of them put on ski masks, Halloween masks and bandannas and entered the building while others patrolled outside with flashlights. Once the kidnapping team got inside, they reviewed their plan—how they would tie up the husband, take his phone and keep him away from the windows while they did whatever else they planned to do.

They had a thorough plan that left out one important contingency: Their clients for the evening's kidnapping were undercover FBI agents. When law enforcement officers rushed into the warehouse and arrested Epstein's snatch team, they found, according to the **indictment**, surgical blades, plastic bags, a screwdriver, a rope and ceremonial items used in recording gets. Epstein, however, was nowhere in sight. As he'd explained in an earlier meeting with the agunah's brother, which was secretly taped, he would be out in public, firming up his alibi in case the police got involved.

Epstein, 69, along with Martin Wolmark, an Orthodox rabbi who heads a yeshiva in Monsey, New York; rabbis Jay Goldstein and Binyamin Stimler of Brooklyn; and David Epstein, have been **charged** in New Jersey federal court with conspiracy to commit kidnapping and related charges. Each faces up to life in prison and a \$250,000 fine.



Jay Goldstein arrives for his trial at Federal Court, February 18, 2015, in Trenton, N.J. Credit: Mel Evans/AP

Earlier this year, Wolmark **pleaded guilty** of conspiring to commit extortion. He faces up to five years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine, and will be sentenced in May. Six co-conspirators, including two of Goldstein's sons, have already pleaded guilty.

The trial for Epstein, David Epstein, Goldstein and Stimler began February 18 in federal court in Trenton, New Jersey. In addition to that FBI sting, the indictment drew on a kidnapping in November 2009, when a victim was lured from Brooklyn to Lakewood, tied up in a van, assaulted and shocked with a stun gun until he agreed to give his wife a get. A second kidnapping allegedly took place on October 17, 2010, when David Epstein and accomplices tied up a victim and beat him into giving the get. On August 22, 2011, David Epstein and others allegedly barged into a man's home and assaulted him and his roommate, punching them in the face, handcuffing and blindfolding them, and binding their legs.

Epstein's alleged kidnapping service is neither a crazy aberration nor a hot new trend in Brooklyn's Orthodox neighborhoods. Beat-downs and kidnappings are a long-whispered-about last resort for agunot who face years chained to men who won't let them go. Controlled by husbands who manipulate their position, wield emotional and legal power, and leverage their marriages for their own gain, these women are a gruesome example of domestic abuse.

Who, then, are the real villains in this story? Epstein and his so-called "kidnap team" or the vengeful husbands who were allegedly taken and beaten up for refusing to give their wives gets?



Binyamin Stimler arrives for his trial at Federal Court, Feb. 18, 2015, in Trenton, N.J. Credit: Mel Evans/AP

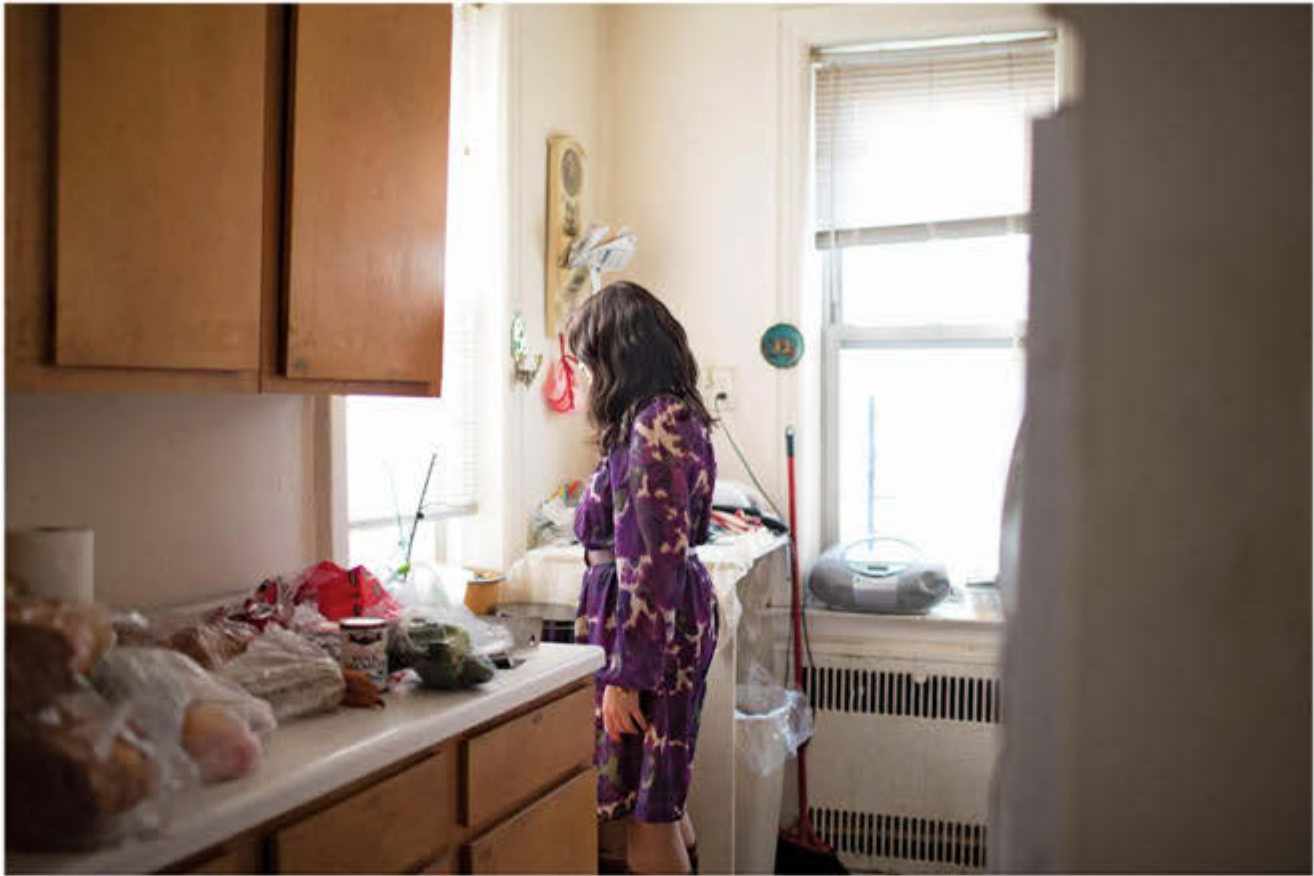
Gotta Give to Get

Divorce is rarely a simple matter for any couple, but in the Orthodox Jewish community, it can be a ruthless and often brutal process, especially for women. When a beth

din summons a husband to participate in the get process, he can respond in three ways: agree to give the get; go to court, provide his reasons for refusing and wait for the rabbis' decision; or ignore the request. When the latter happens, the beth din issues a contempt order, called a seruv, stating that the husband is not complying with Jewish law and instructing his community to shun him in hopes that the social and religious cold shoulder will convince him to change his mind.

Men refuse to give gets for all sorts of reasons: money, child custody, leverage in their divorce proceedings and plain old spite. There are no hard statistics on how long the average woman remains shackled, but leaders in the Orthodox community estimate anywhere from one to five years, though some divorces drag on for decades. "Women die agunot!" says Sharon Weiss-Greenberg, executive director of the [Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance](#). "There was a story about the oldest agunah, and she died at 70 or 80 and spent the majority of her life as an agunah."

A recent [study](#) by the Mellman Group offered more concrete insights: Between 2005 and 2010, there were 462 cases of agunot across North America. One-third of those cases occurred in the final year of the study, and half took between one and five years to resolve. Thirty-five percent of the organizations polled were unable to estimate how long a resolution would take.



An unnamed woman stands in her kitchen in New York, in 2014. She is trying to get a divorce from her Jewish Orthodox husband. Credit: Aviva Klein

Centuries ago, Jewish communities were close-knit enclaves with a centralized rabbinic authority. It was harder then for Jews to assimilate into society, so it was easier for the community to police itself. If a husband ignored the rabbis' advice and refused to give his wife a get, he'd be shunned and there wasn't anywhere for him to go. Today's agunah problem is another beast entirely. "The husband is available—he's right in front of us—but he's not prepared to give a get," says Rabbi Shlomo Weissmann, director of the **Beth Din of America**, a leading Orthodox religious court in New York. Rabbinic literature describes how to handle get refusal, but these treatments are limited to archaic situations, like a husband lost at sea or missing in action at war, not cases where he withholds a get to control divorce proceedings.

In Israel, men who refuse to give their wives gets can lose their driving privileges or get thrown in jail. In the U.S., however, secular courts cannot meddle in Jewish divorce proceedings. Groups like the **Organization for the**

Resolution of Agunot (ORA) organize public shamings and rally support on behalf of agunot. Their tactics include staging protests in front of a husband's home and office, urging his community and synagogue to keep him out, raising awareness in the media and applying financial and legal pressure.



The ultra-Orthodox community is struggling to navigate today's rapidly changing world. Here, an image of a Jewish divorce from the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Credit: Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty

Last February, Rabbi Jeremy Stern, executive director of the ORA, walked into a minyan (prayer service) at Yeshiva University in Manhattan, spotted Yechiel Friedman and publicly removed him from the service. Friedman has allegedly refused to give his wife a get for nearly 18 years. “You’re not welcome! You can leave now!” Stern is seen saying in a YouTube **video** of the event, which went

viral. “Give your wife a get. Eighteen years, Yechiel. It’s ludicrous! You’re a rasha [a wicked person]!”

The ORA condemns all acts of violence, and while there are circumstances in which Jewish law allows for the use of force, says Weissmann, “in a civil society where the rule of law prevails, the use of force is not an option.” Thus the impossible reality sets in. As Beverly Siegel, the filmmaker behind the 2011 documentary *Women Unchained*, puts it, “Here’s a woman’s life hanging in the balance. American law can’t help you. Jewish law has reached the limits of what it can do for you. What are you going to do?”

Kosher Smartphones

The ultra-Orthodox community is struggling to navigate today’s rapidly changing world. In New York City last year, at least four baby boys developed herpes—and many are pointing to the ultra-Orthodox ritual of *metzitzah b’peh*, in which a rabbi sucks blood from an infant’s circumcised penis, as the cause. Last year, a group of ultra-Orthodox men delayed an El Al flight from New York to Israel when they refused to take their assigned seats. The reason? They cannot sit next to women.

Last January, the ultra-Orthodox Israeli newspaper *HaMevasser* erased Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, **from a photo of world leaders** marching against terrorism in Paris. In 2011, an ultra-Orthodox paper in Brooklyn edited Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and National Security Council member Audrey Tomason out of a photo of the White House Situation Room during the Osama bin Laden raid. Both decisions were made due to modesty rules within the Orthodox tradition. And in 2013, a **viral video** surfaced featuring young, fresh-faced Orthodox men admitting how scared they once were at the prospect of marrying older women. “Four months older,” says one. “Exactly one year and three days older,” says another. The PSA wasn’t produced by *The Onion*; it was made to convince young Jewish men that it was OK to marry “up.”

Whether it's dealing with a “**kosher smartphone**” and the controversial new **Shabbos App**, or taking over New York's Citi Field to protest the dangers of the Internet, or addressing today's agunot crisis, there's one daunting fact for the Orthodox community: Jewish law cannot be altered. “No one who claims to be Orthodox would say, ‘We're just going to annul this part of the law.’ You can't do that,” says Mark Bane, a partner and chairman of the Business Restructuring Department at Ropes & Gray, who co-founded **Kayama**, a nonprofit that encourages nonobservant divorcing Jews to obtain gets. “We are committed to the rules. We just want to figure out a way to stop people from abusing the rules. A man who refuses to give a get is a bad guy! Laws don't stop people from being bad people.”



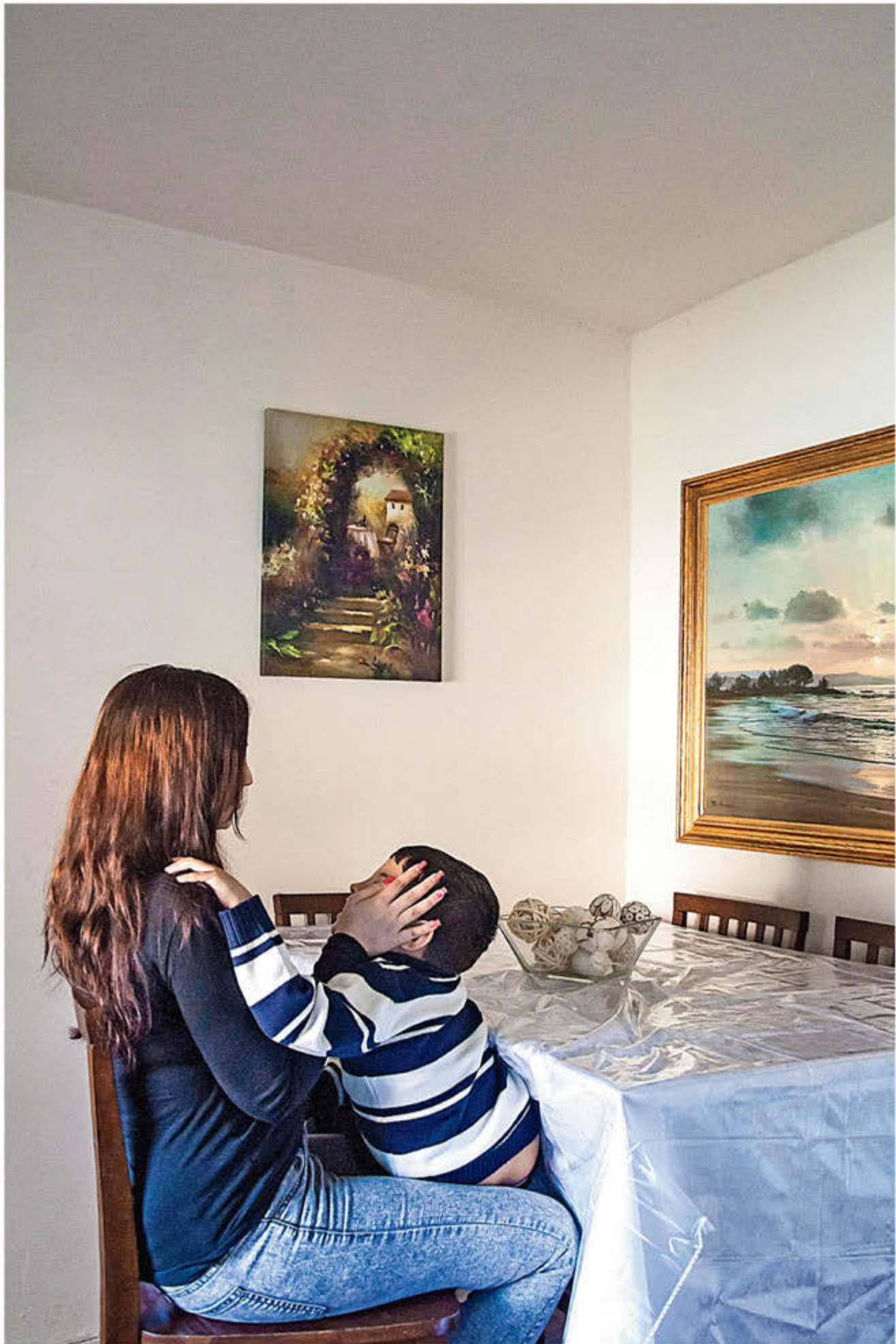
An FBI agent stands guard as evidence sits in the trunk of a vehicle at the Brooklyn residence of Rabbi Mendel Epstein during an investigation, October 10, 2013, in New York. Credit: John Minchillo/AP

Last year, a rabbinical court in Israel **granted** a special kind of get to a 34-year-old woman whose husband had been in a coma for seven years. The get zikui, as it's called, involves a religious court acting on behalf of the husband to give his wife a get. “Even though the husband says,

‘I don’t want to give her the get,’ the court says, ‘Deep down, we know you want to give the get so we want to act on your behalf,’” says Rabbi Asher Lopatin, president of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School in New York, a leading Modern Orthodox yeshiva. But the approach, which originated in prewar Europe, is rare today.

A more modern solution to the agunot crisis is the halachic prenuptial agreement. The prenup, which is enforceable in the U.S., states that the couple must go to the Beth Din of America if they decide to divorce and holds the husband financially responsible for his wife until the get is given. “It deals specifically with the get, and it’s worked 100 percent of the time in cases of get refusal,” says Stern.

According to a 2009 survey by the Rabbinical Council of America, which represents mainstream Modern Orthodox rabbis in the U.S., 70 percent of respondents either encourage or require the use of a halachic prenup before they perform a marriage ceremony. “In the cases we handle, it’s very rare for a young Modern Orthodox couple married within the last 10 years to run into an agunah problem, because typically they’ve signed the prenup and it works seamlessly to solve the problem,” says Weissmann. “Within more Haredi communities, the prenup hasn’t been as widely adopted, but it’s possible that as the problem continues to present itself and not get better, it could be more embraced.”



A woman sits at home with her son in New York, 2013. She became disillusioned with Judaism after waiting years for a get and no longer subscribes to an Orthodox lifestyle. Credit: Aviva Klein

The prenup does have limitations, “especially for people for whom money is no object,” says Rabba Sara Hurwitz,

dean of Yeshivat Maharat in Riverdale, New York, the first yeshiva to ordain women as Orthodox clergy. “But I think that any clergyperson who performs a wedding without a religious prenup is unconscionable.”

Those outside Orthodox Judaism often wonder why agunot don’t simply leave their community and move on. “People say, ‘Why doesn’t she just forget this backwards patriarchal system? She has her civil divorce!’” says Stern. “Our response to that is, what fundamentally underlies get refusal is power and control. Get refusal is a form of domestic abuse.

“Asking her to give up her religion is asking her to accept her abuse and have it extend through all aspects of her life and her sense of self,” Stern continues. “It’s pointing the finger in the direction of the victim rather than the aggressor.”

‘The Orthodox Hit Squad’

The trial against Epstein, David Epstein, Goldstein and Stimler has made headlines as much for the salacious details as for the largely unfamiliar Orthodox traditions at the center of the case. Epstein and his alleged co-conspirators have been referred to as “the Orthodox hit squad,” and their actions have been likened to “a scene out of *The Sopranos*.” Menachem Teitelbaum testified that he was awakened one night by a man punching him in the face while two or three others held him down and tried to tie his arms and legs. At one point, he said someone stuffed dirty socks into his mouth. In the background, Teitelbaum could hear men beating up his roommate, Usher Chaimowitz, and demanding that he give his wife a get. Teitelbaum said his beatings lasted two hours.

In his opening statement, Epstein’s attorney, Robert Stahl, described his client as a “champion of women’s rights.” (Epstein wrote the 1989 book *A Woman’s Guide to the Get Process*.) “This is not a criminal conspiracy to have a bogus divorce and cheat the woman out of money.

The government likes to paint this as it's something about money. It's not. It's about the woman and letting her move on in life, getting divorced," Stahl said.



A calligrapher writes a traditional Jewish divorce document on parchment. Credit: Eddie Gerald/Alamy

Aidan O'Connor, who represents Goldstein, says the case has been "overcharged." The penalties for kidnapping and attempted kidnapping, which range from any term of years to life in prison, are more significant than federal extortion charges, which range from zero time to 20 years. Federal assault charges vary by the degree of the assault and can run from one to five years, up to 20 years or life in prison. O'Connor explains that the type of assault alleged in this case would likely carry a 10-year maximum prison sentence.

"This is not a typical kidnapping case where someone grabbed someone and said, 'Give us money or we're not giving your son back,'" he says. "These fellows may have been trying to scare these guys into giving the get to their wives, but there was no intent to kidnap."

The Epstein trial has illuminated a damning problem: What does the future look like for agunot bound by their God and his laws to men they want to divorce? How can we better protect women trapped in marital limbo? “One thing I hope [the Epstein trial] brings to light is the vulnerability of these women,” says Stern. “We need to give them solutions that don’t make them feel they have no other option but to resort to violence.”

“Not giving a wife a get is a horrific thing that can destroy lives,” says Lopatin. “I’m not ever justifying acting illegally, but on a moral scale, I’m not sure, I wouldn’t judge which is worse. I’m very sympathetic to a desperate woman who’s trying to get herself freed. It doesn’t excuse acting illegally but—” he trails off. “We won’t solve this problem by just getting at Epstein.”



John Hart/Wisconsin State Journal/AP

POLITICIANS UNION- BUST THEIR WAY TO THE WHITE HOUSE

**MIDWEST GOVERNORS ARE PROUDLY BECOMING
UNION BUSTERS, AND ONE OF THEM THINKS THAT
STANCE WILL GET HIM INTO THE WHITE HOUSE.**

Fiery labor icon Mother Jones cannot be resting peacefully beneath the crabgrass in the Union Miners' Cemetery, not far from Springfield, Illinois, where Bruce Rauner, the recently elected Republican governor, has launched an unprecedented attack on organized labor.

Rauner, a former private equity fund chairman, made a reported \$62 million in 2013, the year before he was elected. Now the Harvard MBA is challenging public and private unions on several fronts—even pushing the state’s municipalities to create “right-to-work zones,” where workers in unionized jobs could opt out of paying union dues. This town-by-town approach is a relatively new idea and may be of dubious legality, but it’s already caused Cook County, where Chicago is situated, to preemptively declare that it won’t go along.

Rauner is part of a clique of Midwestern Republican governors challenging unions in a region where behemoths like the United Auto Workers and massive public employee unions covering teachers and other state employees have long dominated. In Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker diminished the power of the state’s public employee unions in 2011 by pushing through a law that cut their benefits and limited their collective bargaining power.

That move, and his survival of a union-led recall effort in 2011, not only propelled Walker into the first tier of Republican presidential candidates; it also emboldened conservative governors and legislators around the Great Lakes. Governor Rick Snyder made Michigan a right-to-work state in 2012, and Indiana’s governor at the time, Mitch Daniels, followed suit, creating a bloc of anti-union states in what was once a labor stronghold. Their latest victory: Last month, Walker signed a law making Wisconsin the nation’s 25th right-to-work state.

Rauner’s efforts in Illinois are getting the closest scrutiny. That state is an unlikely launch pad for a crusade against union power. It has been a solidly blue state in presidential elections since 1992 and had not elected a Republican governor since 1998 until Rauner, a longtime friend of Rahm Emanuel, the Chicago mayor who had also worked in private equity, won office last year. Conservative journalist Stephen Moore called the political newcomer’s

campaign “the biggest election of 2014.” Illinois, he wrote in *National Review*, “could become a laboratory experiment about whether conservative ideas can work in a state that has been ruled by...unions and a self-serving political machine in Springfield and Chicago.”

Once in office, Rauner issued a “Turnaround Agenda” that begins with this premise: “Government union leaders are funding politicians who negotiate their pay and benefits.” To put an end to that, Rauner issued an executive order challenging collective bargaining agreements with state employees and urged municipalities and counties to create their right-to-work zones.

Rauner frames the issue as one of freedom and local control. The governor says he wants Illinois communities to decide whether “their businesses should be subject to forced unionism or employee choice.” Forced unionism is a familiar phrase among opponents of collective bargaining, but it’s also a misleading one. If a majority of workers vote to form a union, then it’s customary for workers to be compelled to pay dues as a price for being in a union. Those who don’t want to join the union are required to pay something so they aren’t getting a free ride. By giving workers the prerogative not to pay union dues, right-to-work laws undercut the power of unions.

Hoping to spur municipalities to take on public-employee unions, Rauner sent right-to-work resolutions to all of Illinois’s cities and villages. A municipality can just insert its name and vote on it. It’s a smart strategy since the Illinois statehouse is solidly Democratic and won’t pass a right-to-work law. Setting fires in small towns might arouse anti-union sentiment, and it will surely inflame the unions. Last week, unions packed a meeting of the Oswego County board in northern Illinois, where the nonbinding resolution was up for discussion. Scott Roscoe, president of the Fox Valley Building Trades Council in Aurora, told a local journalist,

“If we don't stop anti-worker schemes like right-to-work, more families will fall behind.”



Anti right-to-work protester Susan Laurin (C) of Michigan State Employees Union Local 6000 yells with fellow protesters outside of Michigan's state capitol building in Lansing, December 11, 2012. Credit: Rebecca Cook/Reuters

So far, no Illinois communities have voted to become right-to-work zones. Three local legislative bodies have decided not to approve the resolutions, one without even holding a hearing. And there's some question as to whether the adoptions of such zones is legal. (The National Labor Relations Act seems to give this kind of authority to states and territories, but not towns.)

Rauner's efforts come amid a long-term, oft-noted decline in union membership from about 35 percent of the workforce in the 1950s to just over 10 percent today. But while many unions, especially those in manufacturing, have hemorrhaged members, those representing public employees have done well, thanks to their protected status. That has changed, however, as cash-strapped municipalities and states have started to look at cutting pensions and contracts to balance budgets.

American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) President Lee Saunders, whose 1.6 million members now face unprecedented political challenges, told Newsweek that all this union busting is helping union organizing. He says membership was up by 140,000 last year. “I think it’s obvious to anyone trying to earn a living for their family today that the system is rigged against working people,” he said in an email. “AFSCME members and activists are having thousands of one-on-one conversations in workplaces and living rooms all around the country about why unions are the solution to the barriers working people face in today’s economy.”

Those conversations haven’t dissuaded Republican governors and even some Democratic mayors to take on AFSCME. While state and local governments always want to save money in contracts with municipal employees, they have even more incentive to do so now. The national economy is reviving, but state and local coffers are still recovering from the Great Recession, and politicians are negotiating harder. Democratic mayors like Emanuel in Chicago and former mayor Chuck Reed of San Jose, California, tried pension reform, despite howls of outrage. Emanuel’s closing of nearly 50 mostly minority schools to save money drew the wrath of the teachers’ union, and its disapproval is one of the factors that forced him into a runoff election.

This struggle over collective bargaining isn’t new. Business vs. labor was a defining, often violent, battle of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Strikes, riots and deaths were commonplace. (Mother Jones is buried alongside miners killed fighting owners in the late 19th century for better conditions and pay.) A Texas oil lobbyist in the 1930s dreamed up the “right-to-work” law to keep Southern blacks from organizing on the oil fields. Texas became the first right to work state in 1943. Michigan became the 24th in 2012.

Some progressives believe the current wave of union bashing is an attempt to scapegoat labor for the failed trickle-down economic theories behind Wall Street's disastrous 2008 meltdown. Anti-tax activist Grover Norquist blames unions for the economic demise of America's heartland cities, but concedes that the Great Recession's disastrous effect on city and state treasuries gave anti-union activists a chance to go after collective bargaining. "Detroit was one of the richest areas in the country that began to decline in the 1950s," he says. "You can work with a reasonable labor union, but the [United Auto Workers] bragged that thanks to their contracts, 100,000 more guys worked than were needed. Can you imagine that? You can't compete with Japan and Germany like that."

Industrial labor, Norquist says, learned a lesson from Detroit. But he believes public employee unions have not because they are protected from competition. "At some point, the UAW came around and understood that the only way to have jobs is that you have to sell cars."

The union bashing could also be a preemptive strike should any 2016 Democratic candidates play the class-war card in an era of historic income inequality. A massively funded conservative industrial complex aids the likes of governors Rauner and Walker in their union busting. One of the most effective groups challenging organized labor is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which wrote Michigan's right-to-work law and has created a task force aimed at city and county public employees. The ALEC's right-to-work laws are now in force in 13 Kentucky counties.

All that activity takes money, and Roberta Lynch, executive director of AFSCME Council 31 in Illinois, says Rauner's efforts are supplemented by "unprecedented resources" and "an incredible level of coordination" involving anonymous donors funding a network of self-described "policy institutes" now operating in every state.

She also says the Illinois governor harbors “pure, unalloyed hatred and [a] Darth Vader destruction fantasy” toward the state’s unions, and predicts Rauner’s “dangerous obsession” will backfire with Illinois voters. “We have a \$4 billion deficit in this state, and he has no plans to address it. He spends his time running around the state every day launching attacks on unions. That’s how he spends his time.”



Keith Dannemiller for Newsweek

SEARCHING FOR MEXICO'S DISAPPEARED

**MORE THAN 20,000 PEOPLE HAVE VANISHED DURING
MEXICO'S DECADE-LONG DRUG WAR. WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE?**

Ricardo Illescas Ramírez wanted a drink. It was August 2013, and the 25-year-old clothing salesman was in Potrero Nuevo, on Mexico's eastern Gulf coast, in Veracruz state. He had arrived earlier that afternoon to meet with buyers,

and when he finished for the day, Ramírez plopped down at a rickety bar near the center of town.

Shortly after he walked in, witnesses say, a group of men in police uniforms burst through the door, dragged Ramírez and several others outside, shoved them into patrol cars and drove off. Witnesses reported similar incidents earlier that day at a nearby park and truck stop. In total, 20 people vanished in Potrero Nuevo that day. None have been seen or heard from since.

Ramírez wasn't the first person to disappear in Mexico, and he won't be the last. Over the past nine years, more than 20,000 people have vanished, according to government statistics. Most, analysts say, have been kidnapped or murdered by drug traffickers or "disappeared" by corrupt members of Mexican law enforcement. The real number is likely much, much higher, because crime statistics in Mexico are notoriously unreliable.

Disappearing without a trace is not uncommon in Latin America. Between 1974 and 1982, at least 10,000 Argentinians vanished during that country's military dictatorship. In Guatemala, an estimated 70,000 people were killed or disappeared in 1982 and 1983 during dictator Efraín Ríos Montt's rule. Mexico, of course, is far from a despotic police state, but over the past six months, the issue of forced disappearance has roiled the country because of the incestuous relationship between Mexican law enforcement and its main adversaries, the country's vicious and powerful narco gangs. As the outrage has escalated, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has promised to restore law and order and bring a sense of closure to the families of those who have vanished.

Yet critics say the government has little to show for its efforts. Eighteen months after those 20 people vanished in Potrero Nuevo, the victims' families still don't know who kidnapped them or why. More important, they don't know if they're dead or alive. "We still have no answers," says Rosa

Maria Ramírez Rojas, 48, Ramírez's mother. "No one can tell us anything."

The Saddest Part

It wasn't supposed to be this way for Peña Nieto. Once lauded by the Western press for his attempts to create jobs, the young, telegenic leader came to power in 2012, vowing to move past the drug war, which has claimed the lives of 100,000 people since 2006. For a while, Mexico's murder rate slid to its lowest level in years, and Peña Nieto drove a series of economic reforms through the country's fractious legislature.

But in September 2014, a new national crisis emerged. More than 40 students in Iguala, a city in southern Mexico, disappeared as they tried to commandeer buses to take them to a political rally in Mexico City. Federal investigators swooped in. What they found was disturbing: The city's mayor had allegedly ordered the police to kidnap the students and hand them over to a local drug gang. The reason: The student protesters had been vocal critics of his wife.

The authorities quickly arrested the mayor, his wife and scores of police officers, along with members of the drug gang. But tens of thousands of Mexicans took to the streets across the country, calling for the police to find the missing students. Many demanded Peña Nieto's resignation. The president responded by stepping up his efforts to find the disappeared, or at least their remains.

So far, the government has made little headway. One major reason: forensics. More than a decade ago, Mexican authorities set up a national DNA bank, intended to solve a variety of crimes, from rape to human trafficking. The bank has collected more than 25,000 genetic profiles, but as the Mexican government, along with the army, the police and a host of forensic investigators, continues the search in Iguala

and elsewhere, fewer than 600 genetic samples have been **reportedly** matched with their remains.

“The Mexican government has the money and the technology, but it lacks transparency and the will to tackle the problem of forced disappearance,” says Ernesto Schwartz, a geneticist and the founder of Citizen Forensic Science, a nonprofit created with grant money to help Mexicans find their missing loved ones. “The saddest part is that the institutions have information, they have DNA samples, but they handle them poorly and don’t share their information with others. We are trying to end the monopoly that the state has on the truth and allow the citizens themselves to have control.”

Other citizen groups have tried to do the same, and the result has led to further embarrassment for Mexican authorities. Last fall, as frustration mounted against the government’s efforts in Iguala, volunteers flooded the countryside, hoping to find the missing students. They didn’t succeed, but they did uncover dozens of secret graves, many of which belonged to other victims of drug-related violence. The problem of forced disappearance, the volunteers showed, was far greater than most Mexicans had imagined.

‘A Brutal Drug Gang’

Over the past six months, volunteers and government investigators have turned up more and more clandestine graves across the country. But their work has offered little comfort to the relatives of those who vanished in Potrero Nuevo.

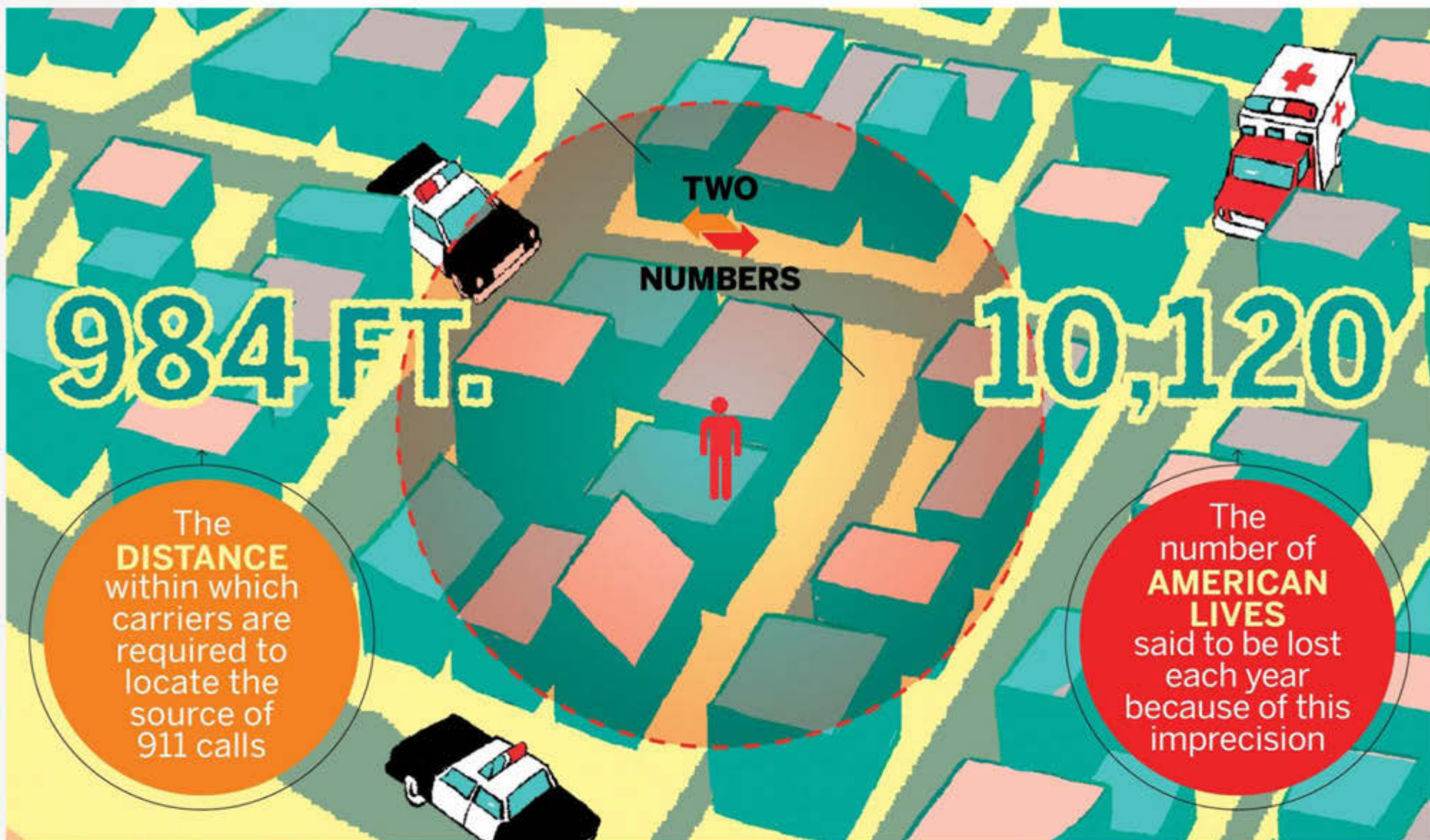
The town is surrounded by lush mountains and vast fields of sugarcane. It’s also on a lucrative drug-trafficking route connecting Mexico’s northern border to the Caribbean south. Controlling these routes: a brutal drug gang called Los Zetas. “They dominate everything and have deeply infiltrated local police forces, who are very capable of

carrying out disappearances,” says José Reveles, a veteran crime journalist and drug war expert.

It remains unclear if Los Zetas, along with help from local law enforcement, kidnapped Ramírez and 19 others on that fateful night in August. Several days after the disappearances, the state prosecutor's office issued a short statement saying it was investigating the matter but denying there had been a police operation that day. According to the victims' families, the prosecutor's office has no arrest record for any of those who disappeared. Nearby prisons don't list any of them as inmates, and the authorities haven't responded to numerous requests to see video footage taken near the scenes of the abductions.

“We had meeting after meeting with the prosecutors,” says Ramírez's mother. “It felt like they were only keeping us busy. What angers us most is that they reacted way too late when we reported the disappearances and that the ensuing investigation ground to a halt from the start.”

I asked Veracruz's state prosecutor's office, the state human rights committee and the office of Veracruz's governor, Javier Duarte, for comment. No one responded. However, not long after my inquiries, the families of the victims say, the authorities contacted them last month, the first time they had done so in nearly a year. They were happy to hear from someone, but they still feel nothing is being done. “We feel abandoned by everyone,” says 43-year-old Alicia Hernández Garcia, whose son Kevin, 20, was abducted in Potrero. “I've told my story so many times to so many people, and it hasn't helped one bit.”



Gary Musgrave

CLOCK BEGINS TICKING FOR 911 SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

**TELECOMS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE BETTER
CELLPHONE LOCATION DATA TO RESPONDERS, AND
THERE'S AN APP IN THE WORKS.**

“911, what is your emergency?”

Thanks to depictions in television and film, that is what most Americans think dispatchers say when answering an

emergency call. But in reality, dispatchers more often ask: “911, where is your emergency.”

The reason this question is asked first is simple: America’s 911 system is still fundamentally what it was when it was designed (for landline calls) in the 1960s, when an address was associated with each call. With the dramatic shift toward handheld devices, though, the government required telecommunications companies to come up with a new system to locate callers.

Americans dial 911 an estimated **240 million times a year**, and **70 percent** of the calls are made on cellphones—a percentage that is only expected to rise. Wireless carriers rely on “triangulation” to approximate the emergency caller’s position, comparing the signal strength and time the signal takes to reach a number of cell towers. But triangulation is an imperfect technique.

The spread of cell towers is irregular. If a caller is in a dense, urban setting, there will be more accurate location data because there are more towers nearby. But these areas are also filled with possible obstructions—signals can scatter off anything from buildings to trees. And wireless calls made from indoors pose the biggest hurdle to getting accurate location data.

On July 21, 2014 a woman in San Bernardino, California **called** 911 at around 11 p.m. to report that she had been attacked in her apartment. The victim, later identified as 26-year-old Michelle Miers, made the emergency call from her cellphone, and law enforcement was unable to pinpoint her location. Information provided by her wireless provider placed her only within a one-block radius.

After 20 minutes of searching, police deduced she was in an apartment complex, and officers eventually spotted a shattered sliding-glass door and Miers inside, covered in blood. She was immediately taken to a local hospital, but succumbed to her stab wounds shortly after arrival. Police said at the time that if they had known Miers’s exact

location, they could have brought her to the hospital earlier and potentially saved her life.

Miers's story is not unique. About half of 911 calls on cellphones are **placed** from indoors, and an estimated **60 percent** of all mobile calls come with either inaccurate location data or none at all.

In 2006, the FCC decided to **require** increased accuracy in location services for wireless calls. But the FCC was "not really going to grade them on how well they performed indoors because they weren't really sure the technology would reach indoors," according to Jamie Barnett, former chief of the Federal Communications Commission's Public Safety & Homeland Security Bureau (2009-2012) and current partner and co-chairman of telecom and cybersecurity at Venable LLP.

Under the FCC regulations, carriers were required to provide emergency services personnel with a cellphone's location within about 984 feet (**300 meters**), more than three football fields. A 2013 **study** cited by the FCC in 2014 estimated that about 10,120 American lives could be saved each year if the location data that wireless providers transmitted to emergency responders was more precise.

The FCC initially proposed to improve the indoor location of wireless 911 calls over the course of five years. After two years, telecoms would have to provide horizontal-location information to within 164 feet (50 meters) of an indoor caller, and vertical information (like what floor of a building someone is on) to within about 10 feet (three meters), for 67 percent of emergency calls. After five years, that level of accuracy would be required for 80 percent of indoor emergency calls. But those rules were never implemented.

"It is very fragmented and decentralized...and you have a lot of jurisdictional politics," says Blair Levin,

former chief of staff to FCC chairman Reed Hundt (1993–1997) and current fellow at the Brookings Institution, of the 911 system. He adds that it is much more difficult to incorporate technological innovations into a marketplace where government is the main buyer.

But Barnett casts blame in a more pointed direction. “The FCC so far hasn’t enforced rules because it costs the carriers money,” he said. “There is not good visibility on the cost/benefit analysis on this because there is no one who can really stand up to the carriers and make the case.”

In filings sent to the FCC in reaction to the proposal, AT&T **said** the changes would “waste scarce resources.” Sprint **said** the standards were “not achievable using current technology.”

Barnett disagreed. “Technologies exist now that can provide a vertical location so the question is how fast can the companies implement them,” he said.

Closed-door talks between telecoms and organizations that represent public safety and 911 officials, however, yielded an agreement with less restrictive terms, said Barnett.

On January 29, 2015, the FCC **voted** 5-0 on a 911 improvement roadmap that after two years requires companies like AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless to provide horizontal-location information to within 164 feet (50 meters) of all emergency callers in 40 percent of cases. After five years, that level of accuracy would be required in 70 percent of emergency calls. The clock for improving location information begins ticking on April 3.

“It is a combination of indoor and outdoor calls,” Barnett clarified. “If you boost your accuracy outdoors you don’t have to work as hard on your accuracy indoors. It is a much more favorable schedule for the carriers.” He added that language in the new regulations asks for vertical location

“when possible,” which “push[es] back the issue of vertical location for years.”

The pressure on the carriers may ease even more thanks to **RapidSOS**—a new app aimed at improving emergency services that fits within the existing 911 infrastructure.

“Despite the fact that your phone knows precisely where you are located, there is no way with the current 911 system to get that information off of your device,” says Michael Martin, co-founder of RapidSOS. “The phone is using a combination of GPS, cellular triangulation, it is also using Wi-Fi hotspot...that’s why Google Maps and Uber generally have a very accurate understanding of where you are located.”

The RapidSOS app, which requires very little bandwidth, is similar to Uber in how it takes location data off devices, but it also includes elevation and **transmits** the data directly to 911 dispatch centers. When downloading the app, RapidSOS asks for additional optional information that can also be sent in the event of an emergency, such as name, contact information and medical history.

Also, RapidSOS manages more challenging emergency communication situations, like those in which a person is unable to speak or there is weak cellphone service.

The app’s interface comes with four main buttons; fire, police, medical and car crash. Once pressed, the phone automatically transmits the relevant data to the nearest dispatch center. If the connection is too poor to transmit data, the app works to reestablish a connection.

Despite the time it takes to open the app and a built-in 5-second delay (a buffer time to cancel accidental triggers), Martin says 911 callers get through to emergency responders faster with the app than by calling. By removing the location conversation and therefore any confusion as to which dispatch center a call should be sent to, Martin claims two to four minutes of time is saved.

“I just immediately said to myself that this is the product we’ve been waiting for,” said Levin.

RapidSOS is not without competition: There are Life Alert and Onstar, for instance, but these services cannot transmit data directly to 911 call centers. And among other mobile app companies, “all of them except for one are more attractive interfaces for dialing 911,” says Martin. “There’s no enhancement on location, there is no active management for a situation where a user couldn’t speak on the phone...they maintain the normal challenges of navigating through the existing infrastructure with a regular mobile call.”

The biggest competitor, according to Martin, is Rave Mobile Safety, which he says requires dispatch centers to use a unique web platform and costs thousands of dollars to adopt.

Martin’s app will be free of charge for both dispatch centers and mobile callers. Currently in beta testing, RapidSOS is expected to become available by late August. The team plans to make money and create a sustainable business by offering a premium version for a few dollars a month. The perks are still being worked out.

Although both former FCC officials see great promise in the product, Levin has the standard reservations: “The problem with any solution is that it is done in a lab,” he said. “It may have issues in real world application—you just don’t know.”



Mikhail Klimentyev/RIA Novosti/Kremlin/Reuters

PUTIN HAS MIXED MOTIVES IN BACKING IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

**BY PLAYING NICE ON IRAN, RUSSIA HOPES TO
STRENGTHEN ITS HAND ON UKRAINE.**

When Barack Obama goes to Congress to sell the nuclear deal thrashed out with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland, he will likely replay his pitch that the agreement offers “a peaceful resolution that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.” To fiercely skeptical U.S. allies, such as

Israel and Saudi Arabia, the White House will likely say that this is a breakthrough opportunity for Tehran to shed its rogue status after 30 years of hostility between the U.S. and Iran. The underlying logic is that Iran, once it falls under international scrutiny, will become a U.S. ally against Sunni Islamist extremism. Another remarkable element of the deal is that it seems to have been the result of a joint effort between Washington and Moscow who, for all their bitter differences over Ukraine, have momentarily come together to work for peace in the Middle East.

If only the Iranians—and their Russian allies—saw things that way.

Instead, according to Iran's Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan, "Iran and Russia are able to confront the expansionist intervention and greed of the United States through cooperation, synergy and activating strategic potential capacities." When his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu, traveled to Tehran in January to sign a comprehensive agreement on military cooperation between the two countries, he spoke of "Russia and Iran's joint struggle with the intervention of outside forces in the region"—read the U.S.—and predicted that "a powerful Russia and a powerful Iran [will] jointly promote international security and regional stability."

During those talks Russia offered Iran its latest Antey-2500 anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense system—an upgraded version of the S-300 system that international pressure persuaded Russia not to sell to the Iranians in 2010.

"Iran promises to suspend its [nuclear] weapons program—but at the same time is negotiating to buy a missile defense system that will protect its nuclear facilities from U.S. or Israeli attacks?" asks one retired Western ambassador with detailed knowledge of the Iran nuclear talks, who requested anonymity. "You can see why many are finding it hard to believe that [Tehran] is negotiating in good faith."

Other reasons to distrust Iran include its support for Houthi insurgents in Yemen, fomenting of unrest among Shiites in Bahrain, supplying arms and aid to Hamas and Hezbollah, controlling Shiite militias in Iraq and propping up Bashar Assad in Damascus—all of which suggest to skeptics that Tehran is seeking to establish itself as an enemy of the West, Israel and the Sunni world. And Moscow has been Tehran's willing partner in at least part of that endeavor. Russia has been working closely with Iran to support Moscow's only other Middle Eastern ally to survive the Arab Spring—the Assad regime in Syria. Over the past four years Russia has provided Assad with assault weapons, grenades, tank parts, fighter jets, attack helicopters, military advisers, anti-ship cruise missiles and long-range air defense missiles that have downed at least one NATO plane: a Turkish F-4 fighter in 2012.

Why has Russia spent so much money and diplomatic capital on interfering with a region so far from its borders? Because Russia, Iran and China represent the three world powers that are in different ways seeking to challenge the post–World War II, Western-led status quo, according to Walter Russell Mead of Bard College. “Russia wants to reassemble as much of the Soviet Union as it can....Iran wishes to replace the current order in the Middle East, led by Saudi Arabia and dominated by Sunni Arab states, with one centered on Tehran,” argues Mead in an essay in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. “Leaders in all three countries also agree that U.S. power is the chief obstacle to achieving their revisionist goals.”

In other words, the main wellspring of Moscow's interest in arming Iran and backing Assad is to use that leverage to extract concessions from Washington for its own empire-building closer to home. “Moscow looks at its role in the Iran talks not so much in its own terms but in how it can play into issues of more central interest to itself,” says Mark Galeotti, a professor of global affairs at New York

University. “The West is forced to recognize Moscow's status as a global power; Iran can feel it has been a good ally; and other current or potential Russian allies can be reassured.”

But what makes Russia's role in pushing for the lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iran somewhat counterintuitive is that in practical terms such an outcome will be very bad news for Russia's economy. “Iran needs cash and will not agree to hold back as part of an OPEC [oil] supply–reduction deal,” says analyst Chris Weafer of Macro Advisory. “While a deal with Iran regarding its nuclear program will open up the country's energy sector for investment and eventually lead not only to a restoration of the 1 million barrels of daily output lost since sanctions were tightened against Tehran, but will also lead to a longer-term rise in both oil and gas output.”

Iran's supply of natural gas is enormous—and the most obvious market is Europe, via Turkey's well-developed pipeline network, that feeds directly into the Balkans. That, of course, is also the heartland of Gazprom's consumer base. Income from Russia's state-owned gas giant accounts for over 20 percent of that country's budget.

Iran's gas coming online will exacerbate the problems that have already taken Gazprom's profits down some 30 percent over the past four years. Economic slowdown in Europe has meant falling energy consumption, the U.S. shale gas revolution has pushed down oil prices, and the spread of Liquefied Natural Gas technology is allowing gas from Qatar and the U.S. to reach Europe. More important still is the fear factor in the wake of Russia's invasion of the Crimea in 2014 that has sent customers in former Soviet-bloc states such as the Baltics and Poland rushing for alternative energy sources.

Ukraine cut gas imports from Russia 44 percent to 14.5 billion cubic meters last year, according to its national pipeline operator, and it promises to reduce its dependence

on Gazprom by 80 percent by the end of 2015. Iranian gas is now set to challenge Gazprom's supplies to Turkey, one of Russia's major energy markets, as well as Europe.

There is another factor in weighing Russia's economic interests: Iran's aggressive regional policies are fueling one growth industry in Russia—and that's war. "I don't conceal it, and everyone understands this: The more conflicts there are, the more they buy weapons from us," Sergei Chemezov, head of the Russian state arms industry conglomerate Rostec, told reporters in Tehran in January. "Volumes are continuing to grow despite sanctions. Mainly, it's Latin America and the Middle East."

Being friends with Iran (and an Iran that will have more money to spend after sanctions are lifted) may be good for the Russian arms industry—last year Moscow sold more than **\$15 billion** of military hardware around the world—as well as Russian companies rushing to build roads, pipelines and infrastructure. But those interests are dwarfed by the potential damage to Russia's economy from falling oil prices and lost gas markets.

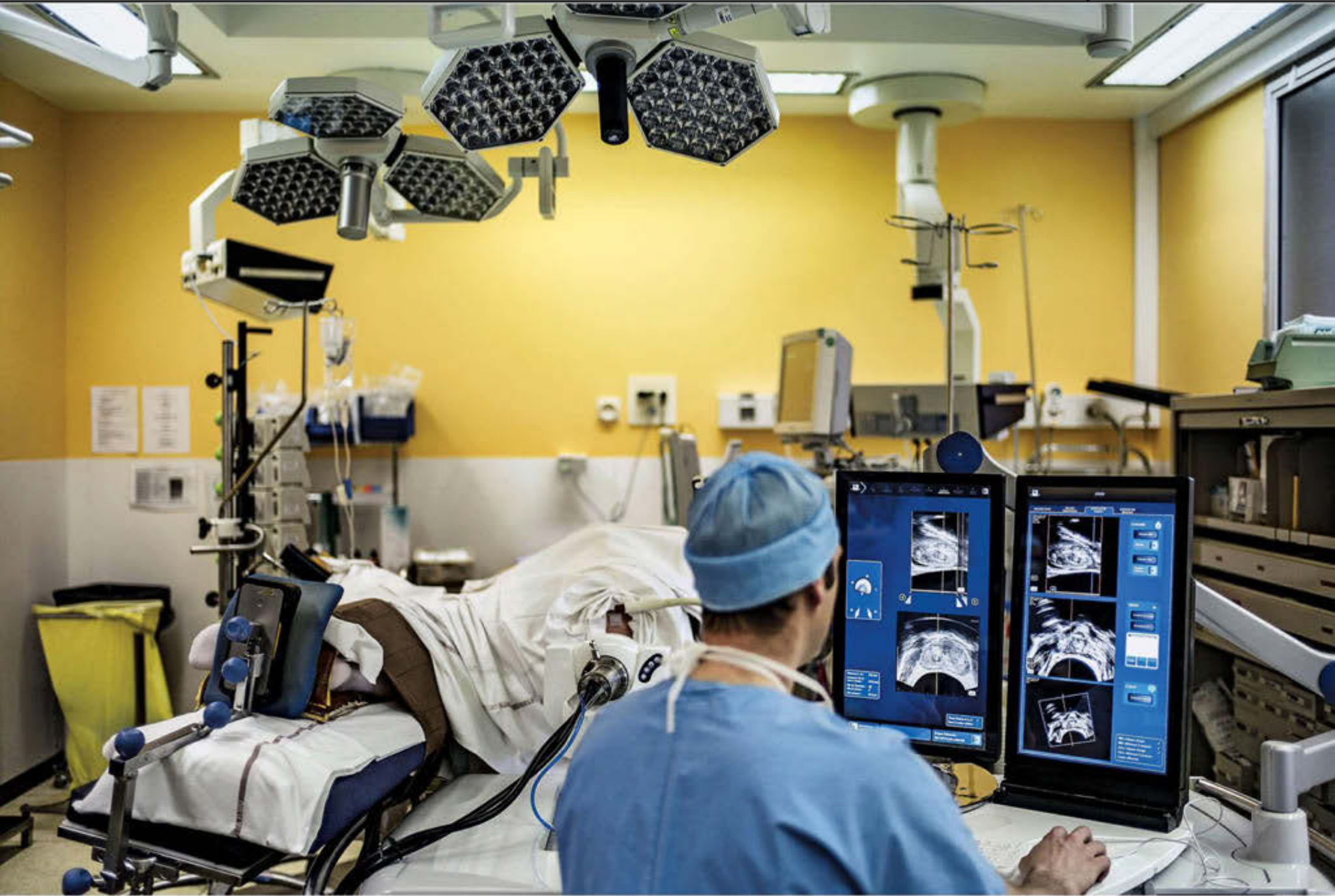
Russia's veteran Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has been pushing long and hard for the lifting of sanctions on Iran. Why? One simple reason is habit: For most of the past two decades the U.S. has pushed for sanctions and, under a variety of administrations, Russia has felt the need to resist. But with a shift of policy in both Tehran and Washington toward rapprochement since 2012, Moscow has unexpectedly found itself on the same side as its archrival, the United States.

Russia's behavior over the past year seems to show that geopolitics matter more to the Kremlin than economic self-interest. U.S. and European economic sanctions in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014—including an asset freeze on Chemezov and dozens of other Putin cronies—have put Russia's economy into a tailspin, but that hasn't

made a difference to Putin's support for rebels in Eastern Ukraine.

As the U.S.'s grand bargain with Iran enters its last and most painful stage, Moscow will certainly look to use any leverage in the Iran talks to forestall any expansion in the sanctions that really matter to Putin—those on Russia.

Fundamentally, Russia's interest in the Middle East remains in "keeping the pot bubbling, but not boiling over... whether [ISIS] in Syria and Iraq, or the Yemen mess," says Galeotti. "The more the Middle East is in chaos, the more the West—and Washington in particular—is focused on the region, and not on Ukraine or Eurasia in general."



Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty

BRINGING VIRTUAL ANATOMY TO THE OPERATING ROOM

**ECHOPIXEL'S 3-D MEDICAL IMAGING PLATFORM HAS
THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WAY WE PRACTICE
MEDICINE.**

Medicine has come a long way from its “let’s-just-open-it-up-and-take-a-look” past. Today, radiology provides doctors with a look into the body without the need for a single incision. Technologies like computer tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) have opened

windows into vital organs, musculature and even the brain. But CT and MRI scans have limitations—they're 2-D images of body parts uploaded onto a computer, very different from real-life, 3-D organs.

“Doctors are trying to extract 3-D information from flat slices,” says Sergio Aguirre, the founder and chief technology officer of EchoPixel, a tech company trying to solve the flat-screen problem. “We found they are looking at flat image slices, and correlating between images, and in the process, forgetting what they are looking at.” He says that in their research, they found that doctors are trained to move from one 2-D image to the next, memorizing the orientation of each image as they go. But, he says, “they may forget a key feature that will lead them to lose important diagnostic information. It is a small mental lapse that's happening from data overload.”

EchoPixel has designed medical visualization software that takes those 2-D slices, reconfigures the anatomy into its proper 3-D spatial structure and beams a depiction of the tissue and organs as if they were real physical objects hovering over a display board. The idea is to enable doctors (wearing 3-D glasses) to lift a skull off the screen with a hand-directed stylus, zoom in on aneurysms and freely rotate the hovering image so they can look at it from many angles. The software has potential in medical school, patient communication and, most important, diagnostic accuracy.

In training trials, radiologists using the software were able to cut their diagnosis time in visual colonoscopies from 30 minutes down to five to 10 minutes, and increased the detection rate of flat lesions—difficult-to-detect and often-overlooked precancerous tissue—by 20 percent. In another trial, Stanford University radiologists were able to use the 3-D images to generate improved surgical plans for major aortopulmonary collateral arteries, a heart condition, decreasing surgery time from four to 1.5 hours.

The 3-D platform was recently approved by the FDA for clinical use, and units have already been installed at Stanford University the University of California, San Francisco; Foxconn Technology Group; and Cleveland Clinic. The company says that the cost of the technology is comparable to—and in many cases, even cheaper than—the 2-D workstations currently considered the standard in health care facilities.

“There’s no reason that, within a few years, anyone should be looking at a 2-D model,” says Aguirre. EchoPixel is also about to begin a colonoscopy trial with real patients, and are working on a data-sharing system aimed at helping doctors across disciplines work together seamlessly on the same 3-D image sets. Universal adoption could have an untold impact on health care.

“All you have to do is look at how CT and MRI affected health care,” says Dr. David Langer, chief of neurosurgery at Lenox Hill Hospital. “All of a sudden we saw things we never saw before, and we started to develop new strategies for treating problems we never knew about. [3-D imaging] could result in absolutely the same thing.”



FPG/Hulton Archive/Getty

FLYING CARS ARE COMING! BUT DO YOU REALLY WANT ONE?

**NOW THAT THE DREAM OF AIRBORNE AUTOS IS ABOUT
TO COME TRUE, DO WE REALLY WANT 'EM?**

It's really not that hard to build a flying car—the first working model showed up in 1947. It's taken us way longer to figure out how to keep ketchup from **sticking** to the inside of its bottle. The real challenge turns out to be building a flying car that makes sense for the society we live in.

Elon Musk, CEO of both Tesla and SpaceX, keeps getting asked why he can't mate his two companies and give birth to a rocket car. He answered in a series of recent tweets, including: "Flying car pros: travel in 3D fast. Cons: risk of car falling on head much greater." And Peter Thiel, everyone's favorite curmudgeon investor, goes around saying, "We wanted flying cars; instead we got 140 characters."

Two main obstacles have kept us from living in a **Jetsons** cartoon. The first is developing vertical takeoff and landing capabilities for a car-size vehicle. It doesn't make much sense to market flying cars to suburban moms who would then have to race them down Stone Brook Chestnut Lane to achieve liftoff. A mass-market flying car pretty much has to go straight up and down from the driveway—quietly, safely and cheaply. That's a seriously hard engineering feat.

The second obstacle is ensuring safety and order once a whole lot of individuals suddenly start zooming around in the air. Automobile accidents kill 1 million people a year around the world, and cars just move in two vectors. Add a third vector—the air above the Earth's surface—and the probability of chaos goes exponential. If we're concerned about overpopulation, we should develop human-piloted flying cars that are so cheap everybody can get one.

Credit for the first flying car goes to Robert Edison Fulton. His family started the company that became Greyhound Corporation, and his father was president of Mack Trucks. In 1947, he unveiled the **Airphibian**. The car end of an Airphibian was a four-wheeled cockpit shaped like the head of a beagle. That piece could be attached to a plane fuselage, which had to stay at the airport while you drove into town in the front part. The thing flew, and one now sits in the Smithsonian.



The AeroMobil's working prototype can fly 430 miles, and as high as 9,800 feet. Credit: AeroMobil

Over the years, Ford worked on a flying car, and Chrysler worked on a flying jeep for the military. Neither went into production. Inventor Moulton Taylor got his Aerocar airborne in the 1960s and almost sold Ford on the idea of marketing it.

None of those machines were practical. All of them took off like an airplane.

In March, a Slovakian company called **AeroMobil** gave a talk about its working prototype at brainy carnival South by Southwest. It's shaped like a wasp, with wings that fold back for driving, but also takes off like a plane. The prototype can fly 430 miles, and as high as 9,800 feet. The company says the model has been certified by the Slovak Federation of Ultra-Lite Flying, although that sounds as reassuring as learning that your heart surgeon's degree comes from the Medical College of Turks and Caicos.

“Unless the flying car can take off vertically, it is not going to change personal transportation,” says **Paul Moller**, who has worked on this problem for 50 years. He is part nuts and part genius. He has spent more than \$100 million trying to perfect vertical lift engines, which at one point

left him in personal bankruptcy. He's also made millions of dollars on technology he's spun out of his work, and wowed a discerning crowd with a 2004 TED Talk on flying cars. His M400 Skycar, constantly on the verge of being ready, looks like a cross between a Corvette and a Cuisinart. Its four rotary engines tip up for vertical takeoff, then turn horizontal to fly—though as of last year, he'd gotten the Skycar only about 40 feet off the ground. Nonetheless, he's been taking preorders since the 1990s.

The Skycar's problem remains engine development, Moller tells me. His company in Davis, California, has long worked on inventing this new technology by itself, and that's always expensive. But something new is changing that: the boom in drones. Drones are small vertical-lift gadgets, but they keep getting bigger and more powerful. Money and brainpower are pouring in—because there's a market. If Moller can't get to a car-worthy vertical engine with his top-down approach, someone working on drones will get there from the bottom up. Solve the vertical-liftoff problem and you've got a flying car that can roll out of the garage and go straight to the sky.

This also calls into question what we really want when we hope for flying cars. Everybody but Moller has tried to build a car that can both drive down a highway and fly. But why? Amazon is investing in drone delivery so it can drop right onto a customer's lawn. It's not investing in flying UPS trucks that both drive and fly. That's because flying and driving might always be two exclusive acts—what we probably really want is a personal flying vehicle, like the ones in Blade Runner, along with a regular car for moving on land.

As for the solution to potential chaos, we're seeing it in the arrival of self-driving cars. Tesla plans to introduce the first consumer versions this year. Self-flying cars would know the paths of all other flying cars, know the landscape so you don't fly into a skyscraper and get weather updates

so you don't fly into a storm. No need to make people get pilot's licenses. No worries about drunken flying. Ten years ago, the idea of a self-driving car—much less a self-driving sky car—seemed implausible. Now such technology is practically upon us.

I feel bad for Moller, whom I've interviewed a few times over two decades. He's blazed a hard trail for so long, yet someone else might finally put the pieces together and make a mass-market flying car. "What keeps me going is that I know it's doable," Moller told me in 2004. After 50 years, he might finally be right.



Percy Feinstein/Corbis

*IN CALIFORNIA,
FARMERS RELY ON
OIL WASTEWATER TO
WEATHER DROUGHT*

**THE SALT-LADEN WATER THAT COMES UP FROM OIL
FIELDS COULD DESTROY SOIL FOR YEARS TO COME.**

The wet, white noise of gushing water rises above a background track of twangy guitar. Water is tumbling out of a pipe into a holding pond that looks as though it has sat nearly empty for ages, its sandy sides the

color of parched desert. It looks like the California of recent headlines: drought so bad the ground is blowing away. Except now, here, in this **promotional video for Chevron**, there is water. Lots of it.

“The sound of that water is music to my ears,” David Ansolabehere, the general manager of the Cawelo Water District in Kern County, says in the video, gazing out over the rapidly filling pond. “Chevron is being environmentally conscious, and this is a very beneficial program, and it’s helped a lot of our farmers, helped our district, tremendously.”

The oil fields of Kern County, where Chevron is the largest producer, pump out more oil than those of any other county in the United States. It also happens to be one of the country’s most prolific agricultural counties, producing over \$6 billion in crop value every year. But after three years of strangling drought, all that agriculture is on life support.

That’s where Chevron comes in. For every barrel of oil Chevron produces in its Kern River oil field, another 10 barrels of salty wastewater come up with it. So Chevron is selling about 500,000 barrels of water per day, or 21 million gallons, back to the Cawelo Water District—the local water district that delivers water to farmers within a seven-mile slice of Kern County—at an undisclosed amount, but “essentially ‘at cost,’” according to Chevron spokesman Cameron Van Ast. In a time when freshwater in the Central Valley is selling at **up to 10 times** the typical cost, it’s a good deal for farmers.

The wastewater Chevron is selling flows, without municipal treatment (though the oil products are removed), to 90 local farmers who spread it on their citrus, nut and grape crops. The Cawelo Water District might first mix the wastewater with freshwater, or it might not, depending on what crop the wastewater will be used on—and on how much freshwater is available at the time. In the midst of a drought, there is less freshwater, so the water the farmers get

is saltier than in a wet year. But the farmers understand that using the salty wastewater on their crops is an emergency measure. If all goes as planned, when the rains come back the excess salt will be flushed through the soil.

But it's a risky dance; over time, high sodium can change the properties of the soil, making it impermeable, unable to take in any more water. Trees would start to get "salt burn." Their leaves would turn yellow, and yields would decline. Eventually, the soil becomes barren.

Ansolabehere says the wastewater mixture sent to farmers is rigorously monitored to keep from salting the soil to that degree. It is tested quarterly for salts and boron, he says. "The only reason this program works is because [Chevron's] production water is of very good quality," he says. "So maybe we'll have a little salt buildup. But the next rain will flush it out."

But the **National Weather Service** doesn't foresee much rain in the immediate future. In fact, drought conditions may "intensify."

For local farmers, dwindling water is a noose slowly tightening. Most take relief wherever they can get it, but not Tom Frantz. "I would rather let my trees die" than use the Chevron water, he says. Frantz is a small-time almond farmer who lives about six miles from the oilfields where the wastewater is pumped into mixing basins. His 36 acres are a speck in the shadow of much larger operations; vast orange groves, pistachio trees, rows and rows of almond trees. But Frantz knows farming. He's been in Kern County, just west of the town Shafter, for all of his 65 years. His grandparents were farmers a few miles away. His parents farmed, too. There's a generation below him, he says, who look as if they'll take it up soon.

In normal years, Frantz depends on groundwater pumped from wells, as well as "surface water," the water held in municipal reservoirs that flows in frigid streams from the melting snowpack in the Sierra Nevada mountains. But

with the Sierra snowpack this winter at a paltry 6 percent of its typical heft, there won't be much to melt. Chevron's wastewater is an option, but Frantz knows what all farmers know: You can't grow food with salty water for very long.



Irrigation water runs along the dried-up ditch between the rice farms to provide water for the rice fields in Richvale, California, May 1, 2014. Credit:

Jae C. Hong/AP

“It’s just not sustainable at all to use salty water, no matter how much you dilute it.... We can farm here a long time, if we’re careful about the salts that we apply,” he says. “I’ve seen the farms that have saltier groundwater, and they have severe difficulties after 50 years. That’s very low levels of salts that’ll do that.”

Frantz has little confidence in how oil industry wastewater is regulated in his area, and he is concerned by what still isn’t known about the contents of the wastewater. **Recently, there was a scandal** over news that state oil and gas officials for years let oil companies inject drilling and fracking wastewater into hundreds of wells in protected aquifers. The water was laden with the benzene, a carcinogen, according to a **Los Angeles Times**

investigation. “What it shows me is that we have to look out for ourselves,” Frantz says.

California doesn’t have statewide regulations for recycling wastewater for agriculture. Instead, nine regional water boards issue permits to local water districts. Once a year, the Cawelo Water District is required to send data about the salt and boron content to the Central Valley Water Board, according to Clay Rodgers, the board’s assistant executive officer. But the district isn’t obligated to test for other components, like heavy metals, arsenic, radioactive materials and chemicals that might be used in the drilling process. Ansolabehere says Cawelo has tested for radioactive elements “a couple of times” over the past 20 years, since “it’s very expensive” to test for, and it isn’t required by the board. Those tests have not turned up any positive results.

Chevron, for its part, says testing last month showed no heavy metals or chemical toxins were present in the water above maximum allowable levels. The arsenic levels were high, however, but “issues related to the arsenic concentrations in the water were fully addressed in the process of obtaining the permit from the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board,” Chevron said in a statement. “Protection of people and the environment is a core value for Chevron, and we take all necessary steps to ensure the protection of our water resources.”

The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board came to the conclusion that the high arsenic in the waste water was acceptable because most of the arsenic appeared in models to get “tied up” in the soil as it made its way down to the water table, says Rodgers. In other words, the Board sees no threat of tainting the groundwater with arsenic, because it largely stays in the soil. But no monitoring is in place to see if that arsenic is building up to unsafe levels in the agricultural soils themselves.

Little to no independent scientific research has been done on this type of water and how it interacts with crops, soil and surrounding bodies of water. Some scientists say there are too many unknowns associated with the wastewater from oilfields. If it is being used on food, and to irrigate land that lies above drinking water aquifers, we need to know more about it, they say—especially in light of the fact that, as Rodgers notes, the Central Valley hopes to expand its use for farm irrigation during the drought.

“There might not be a single risk out there with this practice. But the biggest risk that we have right now is that we just don’t know,” says Seth Shonkoff, an environmental public health scientist and a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. “So until we know, we definitely have reason for concern. We know that there are compounds being put down oil and gas wells that you would not want in your food.”

To Shonkoff’s knowledge, no scientist has ever published a study on what compounds from the oil development process—examples he gives are methanol, biocides and surfactants—might be in oilfield wastewater used on crops. Chevron says these constituents are kept separate from the water delivered to farmers.

Avner Vengosh, a Duke University geochemist, is serving on an expert panel for the U.S. Geological Survey while it begins to look into the quality of produced oil-field water from Kern County. His data are “only preliminary,” but he has found “high levels of vanadium, chromium and selenium” in the samples of wastewater he has tested (although he was unable to say if the water was produced from Chevron’s operations or another of the many operators in the area). Those levels are consistent with data from oil- and gas-produced water from other basins in the U.S., according to Vengosh.

Vanadium, a metal, is classified as “possibly carcinogenic” by the International Agency for Research

on Cancer. Certain forms of **chromium** and **selenium**, both heavy metals, are associated with myriad health problems, including cancer, from chronic high exposure. Ansolabehere says the Cawelo Water District tested for chromium and selenium once, last year, and found none. It has never tested for vanadium. None of these metals are required to be tested for by the Central Valley Water Board.

Could the crops be absorbing these metals? The California Department of Food and Agriculture says it doesn't have the jurisdiction to look. The Central Valley Water Board doesn't sample crop residues where the water is used, either.

For Vengosh, what is most worrisome is the possibility that the water is seeping through the farmland into the water table. "It would end up in underlying groundwater. If the groundwater is moving to a drinking water source, you would end up with that in the drinking water eventually," he says.

No matter how tough the drought gets, Frantz says, he won't be taking the Chevron water. "It just doesn't make sense to ruin something," he says. "To get through years like this, we have to take some land out of production."

But for Roy Pierucci, a farmer who manages a 160-acre pistachio farm that falls within the Cawelo Water District, the unknowns about the Chevron water won't deter him from using it. If the water contains some as of yet unknown elements, "it would be a risk we'd be willing to take," he says, without hesitation. He's been using the Chevron water for 10 years and has never seen a problem with his crops. (Pierucci was featured in the Chevron promotional video, though he wasn't paid for the appearance—he says he participated because he values what the company does for the water district.)

"I've really never asked what the analysis of the water is. I just know it's available. There hasn't been any complaints about it. I don't think they recommend drinking it," Pierucci

says. “If [the drought] keeps up year after year, I think it would be a concern. I think the salt levels would be higher. They blend it for a reason.”

The Chevron water is vital to Pierucci’s operation, but it isn’t a game changer. “It’s not going to save us,” he says. Three years of brutal drought have left his pistachio trees teetering on the edge of survival. If the drought persists another two or three years, he says, he’ll have to start ripping out his trees and reducing the number of acres he irrigates. On another property he manages, where there is no pumping well on-site, he imagines he’ll be pulling out trees within a year. “You can’t chase water forever. Sooner or later you’re going to lose.”



Alex Epstein

*KEN KOLOSH IS
FIGURING OUT ALL
THE WEIRD WAYS YOU
MIGHT DIE*

**ONE MAN HAS THE HERCULEAN TASK OF MINING
THE DATA AND FIGURING OUT THE LIKELIHOOD THAT
YOU'LL DIE OF A DOG BITE, OR YOUR PAJAMAS WILL
BURST INTO FLAMES.**

Ken Kolosh spends his days figuring out how you're going to die.

It's not that he doesn't like you...or even knows you. It's his job. Kolosh manages the **National Safety Council's** (NSC) statistics department, and his 9-to-5 consists mostly of compiling Injury Facts, the council's annual magnum opus of unintentional injuries and deaths in the U.S. The Illinois-based nonprofit describes this 210-page book as the "go-to source" for injury and death statistics, and how much they cost the U.S. The publication also includes data on the annual and lifetime odds of dying from many unintentional causes, ranging from suffocation to drowning to dog bites.

To be clear, the point of Injury Facts isn't to scare readers into a rubber-roomed hermitage. Rather, Kolosh and the NSC hope its data can prevent unintentional injuries, the **fourth leading cause of death** in the U.S. The point of the more than 90-year-old publication is to apprise people of the most significant safety threats, so they can, ideally, change their behavior and lower their risk of a surprising and unfortunate accident.

To the public, probably the best known part of Injury Facts is the "**Odds of Dying**" component. That's the part—for 2013, motor vehicle: 1 in 8,938; cataclysmic storm, 1 in 5,018,409—that gets the most press. Though the NSC says "Odds of Dying" is not the core of the Injury Facts project, they do admit that it does a pretty good job of succinctly making the case of the project's primary argument: We're often afraid of the wrong things.

For example, you are far more likely to die from accidental poisoning than a plane crash. And if you don't understand that and similar bits of information, it limits your potential to modify your behavior in a way that could keep you alive longer. "People really do have influence on their fate," Kolosh says. "By your choices you make in life, you can profoundly decrease the likelihood of getting hurt in one of these ways."

Kolosh is polite and shy, as well as mild-mannered. He is a self-described "boring" dresser. The creative flourish

in his paper-filled office is a tiny, stuffed toy pig that sits atop a shelf. Though unassuming, Kolosh will fight fiercely to prevent distortion of data, colleagues say. He says misinterpretation is dangerous because it could erode public trust in the safety organization. “Ken Kolosh is like the Clark Kent of injury and death,” says Deborah Hersman, NSC president and CEO. “He doesn't hesitate to turn into Superman when it calls for it. He's really assertive when it comes to protecting the facts—he speaks for the data.”

So how does Kolosh crunch these morbid numbers? He and an NSC research scientist start by obtaining the most up-to-date annual mortality data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), which keeps records on every death in the U.S. (The NCHS, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gets its data from death certificates, which come from funeral homes, hospitals and medical examiners' offices.) The NSC gets additional death information from over 30 different sources, including organizations such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Multiple data sets allow the NSC to extract the most specific information possible on fatalities. [[nid:319978]]

For example, instead of just tabulating driving deaths, the NSC can figure out how many are from DUIs and how many are from distracted driving—key details for promoting safety. To calculate the one-year odds of dying from a specific cause, Kolosh just divides the total U.S. population by the number of people who died due to a particular event. For lifetime odds, he divides these one-year odds by average life expectancy, which he gets from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Compiling Injury Facts takes about a year. The NSC has produced the publication since 1921, and is able to quickly pick out key trends. There were 130,557 deaths caused by unintentional injuries in 2013 (the most recent year for which NCHS data are available), the largest number in U.S.

history, Kolosh says. The unfortunate trajectory is “largely due to pain reliever-related poisoning deaths,” he notes.

The 10-year comparison is telling: In 2003, there were 28,700 total poisonings. Of these, 2,080 were heroin-related, while 8,517 were opioid-analgesic-related. Total drug-related poisoning deaths numbered 25,785 in 2003. By contrast, in 2013 there were 48,545 total poisoning deaths—and it was the No. 1 cause of unintentional death that year. Of these, 8,257 were heroin-related, while a whopping 16,235 were opioid analgesic-related. The same year, total drug-related poisoning deaths totaled 43,982.

When Injury Facts makes trends like this public, advocates tend to jump into action. At the end of March 2015, NSC went to Austin, Texas, to promote legislation that would increase access to naloxone, an opiate overdose antidote, as well as a texting while driving ban. As Kolosh is quick to remind us, you shouldn’t think that the population-wide odds of dying from a given cause are the same as your likelihood of dying from that tragedy—your circumstances affect these odds. With motor vehicle deaths, for example, your odds of dying decrease significantly if you don’t drink and drive, or speed.

Of course, there are the strange causes down at the bottom of the list, the ones you can’t do much to prevent. For example, “ignition or melting of nightwear” resulted in three unintentional deaths in 2013. The “threat to breathing due to cave-in falling earth and other substances” resulted in 27 unintentional deaths. Not surprisingly, the NSC won’t dedicate extensive resources toward the prevention of these unfortunate causes of death.

Kolosh, who holds a master’s degree in organizational psychology, started on the path of death scholarship in 1993, when he got a job as an NSC research associate. Fresh out of grad school, he was charged with researching workplace safety. He left the NSC in 2001 and for a few years worked in corporate training management. But when he learned in

2009 of an opportunity to oversee Injury Facts, he wanted in immediately. He did wonder whether the job might make him more neurotic, and he does admit that spending his waking hours studying eternal sleep may make him “a glass-half-empty kind of person.

“Because I publish a book on how people die, I probably am a bit of a worrier,” Kolosh says, adding that he listens to a good amount of gloomy rock music and loves The Cure, but “I don’t consider myself goth, really, because I also like the Talking Heads.” That sort of balanced approach seems to be apparent in everything he does. “To be in this business, you have to have a good bit of optimism,” he reflects. “If you don’t think you can make a difference, then you probably just naturally would move towards another job.”

Kolosh’s worrisome work at the NSC probably affects his 13-year-old son more than anyone else. “He’s the only kid I see in the neighborhood who wears a bicycle helmet. I think he uses our employment as an excuse why,” Kolosh jokes. “He says, ‘My parents work at the safety council,’ and then he does the teenage eye roll.”

When his son was younger, he was in the Cub Scouts, in a den led by Kolosh’s wife. Kolosh decided to do a safety demonstration for the group. One spring day, he bought two small watermelons. His son drew faces on them with a black Sharpie marker. Kolosh put a bicycle helmet on the watermelon with the happy face. He left helmetless the watermelon with the frown. He placed a tarp on his driveway and then dropped the helmet-wearing watermelon from approximately four or five feet in the air.

“The helmet and the watermelon bounced, and the watermelon was perfectly fine,” he says. “I then took the watermelon without the helmet, and I dropped it — and it just splattered. All the kids just tore into the watermelon and ate it straight from the tarp, and then dropped the other

watermelon. I don't know if they knew the lesson behind it, but they did enjoy the watermelon."

One-year odds of dying from a pedalcyclist incident?
One in 341,794.



Carin Baer/AMC

*MATTHEW WEINER ON
THE LAST SEASON OF
'MAD MEN' AND DON
DRAPER'S TERRIBLE
YEAR*

**AS MAD MEN NEARS ITS CONCLUSION, CREATOR
MATTHEW WEINER REFLECTS ON HIS SELF-
DESTRUCTIVE HERO AND THE DANGERS OF BEING A
MAN ALONE.**

We've all done something for money we'd probably like to forget.

I was hired once by a Big Tobacco company to do a magazine that had nothing to do with cigarettes. It was to be filled with stories and images of men out in the wilderness, on the road, in the desert, but always...alone. The subtext being Here you can smoke without being annoyed by pesky people. Kind of like being dead.

"That's what Marlboro Country is," says Matthew Weiner, creator and showrunner of AMC's *Mad Men*. "It's a nonspecific drug state that is probably like heaven."

Mad Men made the link between commerce and ecstasy explicit. "Happiness is the smell of a new car," said Don Draper (Jon Hamm), creative director of the fictional advertising agency Sterling Cooper. "It's freedom from fear." Go back and watch the very first episode ("Smoke Gets in Your Eye"); Don must come up with a way to sell Lucky Strikes in the wake of the 1960 Reader's Digest report linking cigarettes to cancer. Various strategies are discussed, including one that leans on America's "death wish" as a selling point. (The client is not impressed.) Don, of course, rescues the meeting and comes up with a pitch that emphasizes the process of making Luckys ("It's Toasted"). And when the client protests that all cigarettes are toasted, he counters, "Everyone else's tobacco is poisonous. Lucky Strikes are toasted." Allowing consumers to deny death another day.

Weiner and I are talking in a room next to the bar in Hollywood's Chateau Marmont, a hotel with its own death association (it was here John Belushi OD'd in 1982). He is in the midst of publicizing the show's final run of seven episodes, starting April 5, and is eager to talk at length (over two hours) about the arc of the show, Don's decline (and resurrection), the relationships between key characters—everything but the actual plot points of the first episode of the final seven. He's OK with mentioning the

title —“Severance”—and all the word implies. Death has a cameo. “It’s about the life not lived,” he says of the episode.

“People on their deathbeds often say, ‘I wish I had spent less time worrying about what other people wanted me to do or thought of me,’” says Weiner, who’s clearly talking about choices he made on the show, and his sometimes seemingly perverse need to defy the audience’s expectations. “I always use the example of a guy who goes to a party, meets a girl, she gives him her phone number and he loses it,” he says. “In a TV show he’ll go back to the party, find it in some way. In *Mad Men* he will never see her again.”

Audiences have come to love *Mad Men* for a number of reasons—the women, the drinking, the fashion, the design, the drinking, the sex, the music, the drinking and, yes, the smoking—but its dance with death is not high on the list. But we learn early on that Don has taken the identity of a dead man and in the first season he can come off like a matinee idol Camus, saying things like, “You’re born alone, you die alone and the world just drops a bunch of rules on you to make you forget those facts.” The tension between those stances—cold-eyed realism and the sunny sell—has propelled the series through seven mostly stellar seasons.

Persistently confounding audience expectations would have been a death wish in the pre-*Sopranos* days of television, but for Weiner, who worked on that show (the script for the *Mad Men* pilot got him the job), it’s not about giving people what they want. “[When] I was on the *Sopranos*, people wanted to know: When’s Tony gonna whack somebody? I like action, I like tension but I didn’t need to see somebody’s brains on the window every week.”

The *Mad Men* equivalent might be Don hitting on every woman he meets. When I tell Weiner friends have called me, disappointed, when an episode ended without Don playing the Lothario, he laughs. “Like him sitting next to Neve Campbell [on a red-eye to L.A. in the season-five opener]—everything about her was the ultimate Don Draper catnip.

Right down to her being single and a little bit depressed. And he doesn't want to do it."

At that point in the show's arc Don had already blown his first marriage, written an open letter to The New York Times saying the agency would no longer handle tobacco (blindsiding his partners) and run from a mature relationship with an understanding psychologist by marrying his new secretary, Megan (Jessica Paré). For some viewers, Don marrying Megan was the Sopranos equivalent of whacking Adriana, but for Weiner the choice was obvious. "What I realized is that [men of Don's day] don't stay single very long," he says. "It's said in the show, they want a steak on the table. Which is why Dr. Faye [the shrink] says, 'You'll be married within a year.'"

That was a bad year for Don (November 1964 to October 1965 on the show's calendar). Recalls Weiner: "I remember Jon Hamm saying to me, when he slept with the two women in one night and forgot to pick up his kids and stole a guy's idea, 'Please tell me this is the bottom.' And I said, 'Almost!'"

"He's got a lot of alcoholic behavior that is not related to drinking," he says of Draper. "He starts to see the signs pointing to marrying this woman. The thrill of the impulse, that moment of reality, of being saved... It's impulsiveness; it's a really big part of his character." [It's Don's partner, Roger Sterling (John Slattery), the show's Falstaff, who speaks for much of the audience upon hearing the news: "Who the hell is that?"]

I thought the moment Don decided to marry Megan was when his daughter spilled her milkshake and Megan didn't freak out, as her mother, Don's ex, Betty (January Jones) would have. "And they're all stunned," agrees Weiner. "But guess what? She doesn't have any kids." He laughs. "I'm kind of on Betty's side with that. Really? Can't I take you anyplace nice?"



Through seven seasons of Mad Men, Sally Draper (Kiernan Shipka) clashed with her mother Betty Francis (January Jones) as the two grew up, went through family divorce and found a new relationship. Credit: Michael Yarish/AMC

Weiner has had a long-standing tradition of talking at length to principals Hamm and Elisabeth Moss, who plays Peggy Olson, a nice girl from Bay Ridge when we met her seven seasons ago, on and off the set. “He used to call me at night and we’d talk for two or three hours sometimes,” Moss tells me on the phone from New York, where she is starring in a Broadway revival of Wendy Wasserstein’s *The Heidi Chronicles*. “There was stuff he shared about where things were going and where he wanted to go with it.”

The women’s stories—and not just those who sleep with Don—are a big part of *Mad Men*. Those who felt the show fetishized the ’60s Rat Pack, ring-a-ding culture of male chauvinism missed the signals in the first season that blacks, Jews, gays and women were at the gate and the ’50s were ending. “She has the upbringing of the ’50s, but the counterculture is sort of crashing in on her,” Moss says of her character. “Like I don’t really feel like my mom but I don’t really feel like one of those kids living in the Village

and protesting and listening to Bob Dylan.... Another show might have shown Peggy as this sort of bra-burning radical protester but because our show doesn't go in the normal direction—in the direction that you think, ever—Peggy just kind of dips her toe in it and leaves it to go on and become her own person. And that's actually much more realistic.”

Becoming her own person is, in an odd way, a gift from Don. “I think they sort of start off as polar opposites,” says Moss. “I almost picture him at the top and her at the bottom. And they kind of start moving toward each other as he goes down and she goes up and at some point they meet in the middle.... But Peggy kind of becomes what Don never could become—because he's from a different generation, because he's a man? I don't know why. But she kind of becomes more fully developed than he ever became, she kind of becomes smarter than he ever became. And a bit more able to handle herself in ways he wasn't able to handle himself. And I think that is something that he gave her and taught her and helped her to achieve. She surpasses him and leaves him behind a little bit.”

No one wants to see the hero get left behind—though that may just be another example of the show's boy-meets-girl/boy-loses-girl ethos. After Don bottomed out, in the fourth and fifth seasons, audience enthusiasm for the show seemed to cool a bit. (The Sopranos, a major ratings success for HBO, lost viewers before its sixth and final season, too.) Of all the stellar shows of this new golden era of television, *Mad Men* always seemed to know where it was going, even if its creator was scrambling to fill in his hero's biography early on. The seasons seemed like chapters, and there was a plausibility to much of the characters' fates: An alcoholic found AA, the eldest partner died. Weiner's a literary guy—Don starts off living in Ossining, not exactly the garden spot of upstate New York, because John Cheever lived there, and when I tell him that I interviewed Richard Yates many years ago, not far from where we are sitting, we go off on a

tangent about *Revolutionary Road* (“If I had read this book, I never would have made this show”—a revealing statement perhaps, since Yates’s tale of an adman’s marriage ends quite tragically) and his lesser-known *Disturbing the Peace*, a *Lost Weekend*–type novel of a writer losing his marbles behind booze and his pursuit of art, fame and women (“It’s like the *Mad Men* version of the New Testament to me”). Weiner claims he always knew where his story was going, if not how it was going to get there.

Early on, the people at AMC wanted to know more about Don. “What they said was, ‘What else is going on in the show? Who is this guy?’ You don’t have a Dr. Melfi [Tony Soprano’s shrink] and we’re not going to have one because part of the story of this show is that these men don’t talk to anybody, and Don’s never going to see a psychiatrist.” (Date one, sure.) “I was emboldened by working on the Sopranos; I did not want to have a formula. But when they got to second episode and there was no big pitch from Don saving the day, they were kind of disappointed.”

That’s when Weiner came up the backstory of Don actually being Dick Whitman, an ex-GI who stole a dead man’s identity in Korea. He cribbed it from an unfinished screenplay he had written in 1992 and presented it to the suits. “I had the best meeting I ever had in my life,” he recalls. “I told them this story, which was so intricate and long and detailed, and they were like, ‘Did you just make all this up?’ And I didn’t tell them.... I didn’t tell anybody for years.”

Weiner knows that coming clean doesn’t necessarily make for good drama. Don is pushed out his own company in season six after confessing, in a meeting with Hershey’s, that his childhood was a horror and he is not who he says he is. He has to work his way back into the company he helped build, make amends to his partners and Peggy, make peace with his daughter and even his ex. “Watching him go from someone who didn’t want to be a partner because he

didn't want anyone to know his name to a guy with his name on the firm, reluctant to take his name off the firm"—that journey was a tough sell to fans at times. "I wanted to show him change, which is in itself against the very principles of serious television."

Weiner's not too worried about how the audience will react to the show's concluding scenes, and I doubt it will end in Don's death (though a lung cancer diagnosis is plausible). Though Weiner works with a large team of writers, it's still his show and Don's his guy, and both are a little less free with the sort of Existentialism 101 sentiments they espoused early on. "You just stop having a confident attitude about the meaninglessness and disorder of the universe," he says. "Some of that is about having children but I do think it's also about getting older."

Mad Men has come this far not talking down to the audience, not explaining every action and omission, not connecting every dot. "I showed [Stanley Kubrick's] 2001 to my children because they're really into space," he recalls, "and I really thought, I'm pushing it here. My oldest son was 16 and the littlest was 8. First of all, they could not get enough of it, the monkey stuff, all of it. But when the movie ended I asked the 8-year-old, what is the ending? What does it mean? And he said, 'Well, I think he became something else.'"



Jenny Westerhoff

HANYA YANAGIHARA DOES IT HER WAY

HANYA YANAGIHARA IS ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST EXCITING YOUNG NOVELISTS, IN LARGE PART BECAUSE SHE REFUSES TO HEW TO CONVENTION.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, Hanya Yanagihara is the only novelist in the United States who does not live in the bubbling literary cauldron known as Brooklyn. The author of two exceedingly good and strange novels, the 40-year-old author has spent the last 20 years ensconced in a cultural backwater on the wrong side of the

East River, watching a procession of bespectacled young Jonathans (Lethem, Foer, et. al.) turn the once-derelict borough of Saturday night fevers and Sunday afternoon baked ziti conclaves into a modern-day Quartier Latin, only with better subway service and organic cupcakes instead of crusty baguettes. She did it, moreover, while holding down a day job instead of pecking sullenly away in a shabby chic Park Slope cafe where some wounded folk singer raunches and rheums on an infinite loop of whiteboy sincerity.

“I would not be able to leave Manhattan, because it would feel like a sort of surrender,” Yanagihara told me recently over a sushi lunch in Soho, the lower Manhattan neighborhood where she lives and which is largely the setting for her newest novel, *A Little Life*. But don’t assume that Yanagihara is some cloistered Woody Allen neurotic who’d be utterly lost more than 10 miles from Our Holy Cathedral of Cured Meats (known to some as Katz’s Deli). An editor for Condé Nast Traveler, she leaves the city frequently, and had just returned from Oman when we met in early March. She would one day like to live in Asia, in particular Tokyo, whose mixture of ancient beliefs and ultra-modern sensibilities fascinates her.

Yanagihara is a contrarian in more substantial ways, too. She does not have an MFA, that shopworn badge of literary culture, long thought necessary to get published by a good New York house. “It does make things trickier,” she admits, in particular when seeking blurbs from fellow authors for a fiction debut. That didn’t prove a hindrance, though: *The People in the Trees* was widely praised as one of the best novels of 2013. Nor has she fallen victim to a sophomore slump, writing *A Little Life* with furious purpose in 18 months. She had a vision, and she has clearly achieved it. “Hanya Yanagihara’s second book announces her as a major American novelist,” wrote *the usually reserved critic Sam Sacks of The Wall Street Journal*.

Many novelists, lacking sufficient imaginative faculty, write what they know, treading close to the shores of the familiar, drifting along on currents of mundanity. Yanagihara wades eagerly into the murkier coves of the human mind, the depthless lagoons most of us would rather skirt. In her first novel, an anthropologist seems to discover the secret to biological immortality on a remote Pacific island called Ivu'ivu. He wins the Nobel Prize, but his career ends in ignominy when he is imprisoned for molesting some of the dozens of Ivu'ivuan children he had adopted. The final scene, in which he rapes a young boy, is as chilling as anything that transpires between Humbert Humbert and Lolita in the 342 hotels and motels they visit.

The novel is based on the real-life case of the virologist D. Carleton Gajdusek, who had been a friend of her uncle and father, both of whom are doctors. Aside from being the story of one man's ruin, *Trees* is about the despoliation of an island paradise by Western science and its attendant corporations. Yanagihara had wanted to set the novel in Hawaii, where her family is rooted, but was afraid of writing a too-literal "screed against colonization." So she spent 16 years creating a world of her own, fashioned with a restless imagination whose whimsy and faux-scholarship recall the Vladimir Nabokov of *Pale Fire*.

"My parents were the last [generation] to work in the fields," says Yanagihara, a fourth-generation Hawaiian. She was born in Los Angeles, which she loathes ("the driving, the sunshine..."). The family moved frequently to suit the needs of her father, a hematologist/oncologist: New York City and Baltimore, Texas and Hawaii. Orange County, in all its resplendent horrors. Then came Smith College, which she liked about as much as L.A. ("Awful.")

After college, Yanagihara moved to New York and worked as a publicist for several publishing houses before jumping to the world of magazines, where she continues to work what is a job at once rewarding and demanding. She

finds writing and editing for Condé Nast Traveler “relaxing” and “satisfying,” especially since she is often dispatched on international assignments. It’s service journalism, and that’s just fine by her. “They are jobs with beginnings and ends,” she tells me, leaving enough time and mental space for her fiction.

Yanagihara’s second book is utterly unlike her first. For one, at 730 pages, it is nearly twice as long. And while *The People in the Trees* was set on a fictional island, *A Little Life* is set on a real one, the concrete sanctuary Yanagihara calls home. The novel follows, over several decades, a group of four friends who have been together since college (a mashup of Bard and Williams) and have settled in Manhattan. Three are in the arts; the central character, Jude, is a successful corporate litigator who, having been severely abused as a child, continues to suffer from physical and psychic wounds he tries desperately to conceal.

While the first novel was baroque with detail, the second has what Yanagihara calls “a fairy-tale-like quality.” Some New York novels, like Tom Wolfe’s *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, relish in the details of the city, gathering narrative strength from brands of shoes and names of restaurants. *A Little Life* is firmly planted in its setting, but not subservient to it, a rare New York novel that does not even attempt to capture New York. “I hope that the book feels slightly out of time,” she told me long after the sushi trays had been cleared and we sat talking over cooling cups of green tea.

The theme of child molestation unites the two novels and, in fact, may be their single superficial point of confluence. In the first, the molester is the protagonist; in the second, the victim takes center-stage. Yanagihara says that when she was beginning *A Little Life*, she conceived of it as “an answer to the first book.” Both portray the sexual act as something necessary but gruesome, gruesome precisely because it is necessary, its pleasure fleeting and its pain lasting.

Jude's terror of sex is understandable, given the sexual violence he suffered at a monastery in the Midwest and elsewhere; more horrible, to the reader, is Jude's inability to confront his pain, his misguided desire to smother it with silence. And with violence against himself. "[I]n compensation for the sex," Yanagihara writes, "there is the cutting, which he has been doing more and more: to help ease the feelings of shame, and to rebuke himself for his feelings of resentment." Jude's body, already damaged by his molesters—a would-be savior in Philadelphia ran over his legs with a car, an abusive boyfriend in New York threw him down a stairwell—is further damaged by his own hand.

Both of Yanagihara's novels lack convincing female characters, *Life* especially. This was intentional. Yanagihara, who neither has a family nor desires one, says she wanted to explore the notion that "men are offered a much, much smaller emotional vocabulary to work with." Women's emotions were more plentiful and familiar, and hence less alluring for a novelist who has no use for well-trod paths; she wanted, instead, to wend through the humid, lightless crawl spaces of the male mind. How does that limited vocabulary deal with the worst psychic shocks? How does one make it out of the attic? "Are there sorts of damage that are impossible to come back from?"

Yanagihara's editor at Doubleday, Gerry Howard, worried that readers would be unwilling to endure hundreds of pages of Jude's sexual, physical and psychological privations. "This is just too hard for anybody to take," he told Yanagihara, [according to a recent Kirkus Reviews profile](#). "You have made this point quite adequately, and I don't think you need to do it again." However, she insisted that the novel's edges not be softened.

The result is a novel that is often fleet, moving swiftly over many years and many lives. It is, however, occasionally slowed by lengthy disquisitions or dulled by plain language. Yanagihara freely admits that she is not nearly the stylistic

equal of her favorite novelist, John Banville: “I will never be that kind of writer.”

The kind of writer Yanagihara has already managed to become is plenty intriguing. That might, in part, stem from the lucky fact that she was never bullied or cajoled by an MFA program to write a certain way, about certain things: “Not knowing what you're not supposed to do is very freeing.” There are also her endless travels, powered by a curious constitution that doesn't let her “settle into a groove.” That happens to be the quality she likes least in other writers.

It is toward the end of our lunch, as the restaurant empties of its customers and fills with grapefruit-colored afternoon light, that a basic question finally occurs to me: Why did she call her novel *A Little Life*? After all, the life she chronicles (i.e., Jude's) is not little by any literal or figurative measure of literary achievement. It is a mural, not a miniature. Was it irony she sought?

Not so. “All life is small,” she declares. She is, at heart, a tragedian drawn to the fundamental futility of human life. Yet she manages to dress that futility in the vestments of literary art and hence make it not only palatable but compelling. “Life will end in death and unhappiness, but we do it anyway,” she says. That recalls what her doomed protagonist says in *Trees*: “There were endings, but none of them were happy.” Her fairy tales owe more to Ecclesiastes than to Mother Goose.

Now the restaurant is almost empty. Now our own ending has come. We trade some Manhattan media gossip. We agree that *Girls* is a very fine show, honest about the horrors of youth. Does that acknowledgement mean we are old? Probably. And we are all dying anyway, Hanya and Hannah Horvath and myself and the sushi chefs, now without anything to do, gazing down at the slabs of piscine flesh. The world teems with difficult truths; Hanya Yanagihara refuses to avoid them. But finally comes the

check, and then a joke, and then a recognition of how late it has gotten. Our lives are small, yet they are full. And we emerge back into Manhattan, into the last of the faultless afternoon light.



Russ Rowland

*THE STORY OF
HILLARY'S 'FIRST
PRESIDENCY' IN SONG,
STARRING 'WILLIAM
JEFFERSON' AND 'BILLY'*

**"IN ALL MY LIFE I HAVE ONLY EVER LOVED TWO MEN,
AND THEY HAPPEN TO BE THE SAME MAN," HILLARY
SAYS, REVEALING THE PREMISE OF "CLINTON THE
MUSICAL."**

The house lights dim. The set rotates to show the Oval Office, with Hillary Clinton seated front and center. “Let me tell you the story of my first presidency,” Hillary, played by Kerry Butler, says. “In all my life I have only ever loved two men, and they happen to be the same man,” she says, revealing the premise of the show. “William Jefferson,” the stately, reserved Bill Clinton, appears under a spotlight to one side of her. “Billy,” on the opposite side of the set, is the immature party boy who gets the Bills into trouble. And Hillary is the only one who can see them both at the same time.

Confused? Intrigued? Welcome to Clinton the Musical.

After that prologue, the ensemble comes on for their opening number, “Awful-Awesome,” clad in quintessential ’90s attire, including a multicolored blazer with large shoulder pads and a bright nylon tracksuit paired with a fanny pack. The song is punctuated with the unmistakable sounds of a dial-up modem.

The show’s writer, Paul Hodge, 27, was just a young boy living in Brisbane, Australia, when fanny packs were in vogue and connecting to the Internet involved an auditory assault. Hodge, who collaborated on the book with his brother Michael and composed the music and lyrics, was just entering his teenage years when Bill and Hillary Clinton left the White House. Several years later, his family went to Keating!—a musical about former Australian prime minister Paul Keating. “At the end of it,” Hodge recalls, “my dad was going, ‘Yeah, that was all right but I think that politicians don’t make great subject matter for musicals, except maybe Bill Clinton....’”

That comment marked the beginning of a long creative process: As Clinton the Musical evolved from concept to two-act show, it made stops at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the Kings Head Theatre in London and the New York Musical Theater Festival. The show makes its off-

Broadway debut at the New World Stages in Manhattan on April 9 after two weeks of previews.

When his brother first suggested they put two Bill Clintons on stage, Paul dismissed the idea. But then he began reading. “In Clinton’s autobiography he talks about how he feels like he’s led two parallel lives and all these other people in their biographies talked about the contradictions in him,” he says. In *Behind the Oval Office*, Clinton’s former political advisor and campaign manager **Dick Morris wrote**: “I sometimes thought that Bill Clinton had two mindsets: the Boy Scout and the politician.... The reason there are so many comebacks in Clinton’s career is the alternation of these two mindsets.” Hodge says **Morris gave Clinton nicknames** like “Saturday-night Bill” and “Sunday-morning President Clinton.”

In the spring of 1997, syndicated Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen homed in on the idea. Titled “One Clinton had no clue what the other Clinton did,” the column began: “Move over Scotland. It seems the first cloning actually took place in Little Rock where, in 1946, two Bill Clintons were produced, one having little knowledge of what the other was up to.”

William Jefferson and Billy appear onstage together throughout most of the show, but all of the cast save for the first lady can only see one Bill at any given moment. In Act I, William Jefferson is visible to the other characters, because he has taken the presidential oath after a vote among himself, his alter ego and Hillary.

“Who wants me to be president?” asks William Jefferson, played by Tom Galantich. He and Hillary immediately raise their hands, while Billy looks on in disbelief. “Oh look at that,” says William Jefferson, “two to one, you lose, goodbye.”

“That’s not fair!” Billy says.

“That’s democracy!” Hillary exclaims, as they try to push Billy offstage and out of their lives. For the rest of the first act, most of the cast sees only William Jefferson. In Act II, it’s Billy who takes the oath and only Billy the cast can see.



"Clinton the Musical" opens off-Broadway on April 9 after two weeks of previews. Credit: Mark Stutzman

The portrayal of Bill Clinton as two people springs from a grain of truth, and Hodge says he tried to create characters

that inflate truth into something exaggerated and hilarious. Al Gore, for example, is played silently by a cardboard cutout. “Why do you need a vice president when you have me?” Hillary asks William Jefferson as she introduces the two-dimensional Gore, who, she points out, is recyclable.

“It’s what he would have wanted,” William Jefferson quips.

In another number, several congressmen appear as an ensemble of cardboard cutouts, most notably now–Speaker of the House John Boehner, whose face is tinted a bright orange.

The attorney Kenneth Starr, who investigated Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal, is portrayed as a conniver who wrangles an unsuspecting Newt Gingrich into his evil plan to destroy Clinton. In the song “Sexual Relations,” the two depose Billy to see if they can prove he perjured himself when he said he “did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.”

“It depends,” Billy says, “on what the meaning of sex is.” (He also at one point repeats the real Bill Clinton’s notorious deposition statement, “It depends on what the meaning of the word is is.”)

The name Lewinsky is associated around the world with one salacious incident, but the woman who plays her, Veronica Kuehn, has tried not to dwell on the dirty jokes. (Other than in “Monica’s Song,” which has an obscene chorus.) For the most part, Kuehn says, her version of Monica is a young, vivacious woman who is totally in love. “So far...there hasn’t been anything too tawdry and too mean,” she said between rehearsals one day, as she, Hillary and the two Bills spoke with Newsweek over lunch.

“I think we’re all very sensitive to that,” added Duke Lafoon, who plays Billy. “It’s a loving roast of everybody involved.”

Also included in the "grand farce," as director and choreographer Dan Knechtges calls it, is a living portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt, played by Judy Gold behind an illuminated frame. She recites Roosevelt quotations in character throughout the show, and Hillary constantly misinterprets them as justification to do what she wants.

At the end of Act II, Roosevelt steps out from behind her frame to chastise Hillary, and to convince her to stay with her cheating, lying husband. The two first ladies sing "Brew It for Your Country," a song that compares women to teabags: "Can't foresee how strong she'll be, till you put her in hot water," Roosevelt sings.

"Make your brew, and when you're through, she's easily disposed of," Hillary retorts.

Roosevelt insists she stay strong and "Brew It for Your Country," and Hillary, as she is wont to do, misinterprets the message: "You're right!" she sings, giddy from her revelation. "I should run for president."

The Clinton musical comes as the real Hillary Clinton is expected to announce her presidential bid for 2016. Butler, who plays Hillary onstage and (her disclaimer) volunteered for her first campaign in 2008, says it has been a challenge to portray a well-known figure who is under constant public scrutiny. She believes most of the people portrayed in the musical would appreciate the "loving roast"...except Hillary.

As for the show's potential impact on voters, Hodge says, "People have such fixed ideas about the Clintons that I don't think...we would change how they feel." He adds that he and his brother tried not to take sides—though one of the biggest laughs of the night comes from a suggestion that Fox News be made illegal.

The show isn't meant to upend the audience's political views, but perhaps they'll exit the theater with a fresh take on how theatrical politics can be, Lafoon says, "and maybe humming some of the songs" as they head home.

And since some of the lyrics are not kid- or office-appropriate, humming might be advisable.

01

Tikrit, Iraq - A member of the Iraqi security forces on April 1 beats an ISIS militant captured after government forces and Shiite militias took back the town. This was one of several beatings and lynchings reported by Reuters, along with looting and other reprisals. Iraqi authorities said they found on the outskirts of the city 12 mass graves thought to hold the remains of as many as 1,700 soldiers slaughtered by ISIS militants when they overran the city last year.



Alaa Al-Marjani/Reuters

02

TALKED OUT

Tehran, Iran - Iranian Foreign Minister and top nuclear negotiator Mohammad Javad Zarif waves to well-wishers at Mehrabad International Airport April 3, upon his return from international nuclear negotiations in Lausanne, Switzerland. Iran and six world powers reached a preliminary nuclear agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear activities and providing sanctions relief for the increasingly isolated nation. Despite criticism from Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who called the deal a pass for Iran to create nuclear weapons, and Congressional Republicans in the U.S., the White House touted the agreement as the best solution, one that will allow international oversight and reduce the chances of another war in the Middle East.



03

BRING UP THE BODIES

Garissa, Kenya - Pickup trucks carrying the bodies of the alleged attackers in the massacre of nearly 150 people at Garissa University College drive slowly through a crowd, April 4. At least four masked gunmen entered the campus during morning prayers and opened fire indiscriminately, then began targeting Christians. The attackers were killed by security forces following a 13-hour siege. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi confirmed that al Qaeda-linked militant group Al-Shabaab had claimed responsibility. The Somalia-based terrorist group attacked a hotel in Mogadishu in February and a shopping mall in Nairobi in 2013.



Ben Curtis/AP

04

IN A STATE OF DENIAL

Little Rock, Arkansas - State Rep. Warwick Sabin shouts along with protesters opposed to a proposed religious freedom bill outside the House chamber at the state Capitol, March 30, 2015. After Gov. Asa Hutchinson voiced his opposition to a bill that opponents said would allow discrimination against gays and lesbians, a House committee advanced an amended version, which the governor signed on April 2. The Arkansas bill came less than a week after a similar bill in Indiana sparked outrage, and was quickly revised to clarify that it did not authorize discrimination. Another 14 states are considering similar legislation this year.



Danny Johnston/AP

Newsweek